

SUCCULENCE

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SUCCULENCE
by PHIL WILLMOTT

**First performed with the sub-title "A Gothic Comedy for
The Time of Aids" June 92 at New Dramatists, Off
Broadway, New York. Directed by Lisa Peterson. As part
of The Royal Court / New York Times, Brook Atkinson
Playwright exchange.**

CHARACTERS

JOHN HARDACHRE / BRENDAN HARDACHRE.

HELEN

KEITH

LYDIA

THE WOMAN.

SIMON

THE DEMON

All the characters are in their late twenties.

NB.

**SCRIPT TO BE FURTHER EXTENSIVELY DEVELOPED IN
REHEARSAL.**

ACT ONE.

THE RUMBLE OF THUNDER. MUSIC.

THE STAGE FILLS WITH PEOPLE SCURRYING HOME THROUGH THE RAIN.

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ANONYMOUS, HUDDLED IN OVERCOATS AGAINST THE COLD.
A SPOTLIGHT PICKS OUT JOHN HARDACHRE - A YOUNG, RATHER DASHING
CATHOLIC PRIEST.
THE ACTION FREEZES AROUND HIM. HE SPEAKS;

JOHN:

(VOICE OVER) The sun set across the city at five pm. A great gash of a sunset, burning an angry red before it gave up the ghost on it's people, scurrying home through the howling dogs and the dispossessed, laughing to themselves, as the darkness envelops them in its folds. The politicians are quiet tonight. The paper is full of strange stories. A woman was found wandering through city hall ranting that last night, in the park, it rained a shower of toads with coal for eyes and tongues of flame. In the suburbs, a man settled down for the evening and pulled from the cauliflower cheese of his TV. dinner a bats wing.

He is everywhere. you sense him watching us all, waiting, coiled like a spring.

But no one talks of him.

THE STREET DISSOLVES AWAY AND JOHN WITH IT.
HIS VOICE CONTINUES;

A Killer stalks the city. The police do nothing, they are powerless against it's evil. The politicians and the newspapers have long ago grown silent, shamed by the impotence of their words, they turn to easier targets for it seems he is unstoppable.

Only I pursue him now and I begin this record so that those who come after, may arm themselves with what little I have been able to learn.

A DEMON ENTERS ITS LAIR IN A DAMP, RAT INFESTED BASEMENT OF SOME
LONG DERELICT BUILDING.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT WE COME TO SEE IT AS A DEMON, IT IS NOT A
PSYCHOPATH.

IT HAS JUST KILLED AND IS COVERED IN BLOOD.

IT IS RATHER CUTE, IN A PUCKISH SORT OF WAY. A GLANCE AT IT'S EYES,
HOW EVER TELLS YOU IT IS PASSION WITHOUT LOGIC. YOU WOULD NOT
MESS WITH IT.

JOHN'S VOICE CONTINUES;

He is not human, I am sure of that. It is a demon, a perverse child that refuses to learn our codes of right and wrong. What it meets it kills, what it kills it devours.

THE DEMON FALLS AGAINST THE DOOR, EXHAUSTED. IT CRAWLS ACROSS
THE FLOOR AND TURNS ON A VIDEO RECORDER. IT SITS ON THE FLOOR IN

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FRONT OF THE TELEVISION LIKE A LITTLE CHILD.

It has the child's attraction to easy, pleasing objects, the moon reflected in a puddle, a ball of silver paper, a dog, and inexplicably, extraordinarily, terrifyingly The creature is drawn to musical comedy show tunes. God help us in our struggle.

THE VIDEO STARTS. THE GREEN LIGHT FROM THE SCREEN PLAYS ACROSS THE DEMON'S FACE.

IT IS WATCHING THE OPENING OF "THE SOUND OF MUSIC".

THE ORCHESTRA SWELLS INTO THE OPENING NUMBER. JULIE ANDREWS BEGINS TO SING.

THE DEMON IS TRANSFIXED.

WHEN IT SPEAKS IT HAS A LOW, GRAVELY VOICE. IT IS ONLY REALLY CONFIDENT WITH SIMPLE WORDS AND SENTENCES IT HAS LEARNT OFF BY HEART.

DEMON:
Julie!

AS THE SONG BUILDS, THE DEMON PEELS OFF HIS CLOTHES AND DANCES NAKED AROUND THE ROOM IN IMITATION OF JULIE.

LIGHT AND SOUND FADE SLOWLY ON THIS.

END OF SCENE.

THE VESTRY AT ST ANTONY'S.

JOHN ENTERS FROM THE STREET.

ANOTHER YOUNG PRIEST, FATHER KEITH, INTERCEPTS HIM.

KEITH:
(UNDER HIS BREATH) Don't say a word! You've really done it this time.

JOHN:
What are you talking about?

KEITH:
Shut up they'll hear you.

JOHN:
Who?

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KEITH:

Cardinal O'Hara is here. We're in big trouble.

JOHN:

But who would have told him about us? We never show how we feel about each other in public.

KEITH:

That isn't the problem.

JOHN:

They've found that letter I wrote from the conference, when I was missing you. I told you to burn it.

KEITH:

It's not about us. Will you listen! You've upset some very powerful people. They've got you certified insane, they've come to collect you.

JOHN:

No!

KEITH:

(TO OFF) Be with you in a moment Gentlemen, just a problem with the cleaning arrangements.(TO JOHN) Listen, go back to the house. I'll try and persuade them you went on that retreat. That should give us time to think.

JOHN:

But!

KEITH:

Don't argue, just do as I say. We're in serious shit this time. I'll see you at the house as soon as I can.

JOHN:

Keith.

KEITH:

Go! (SO THE PEOPLE IN THE NEXT ROOM CAN HEAR) Really, ladies I do expect you to be able to organize the cleaning without all this squabbling.

HE SHOOTS JOHN A DESPERATE LOOK AS HE ENTERS THE NEXT ROOM.

(OFF) Well, gentlemen, I'm afraid it looks as if you've missed him this time...

END OF SCENE.

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JOHN IS BACK AT HOME. HE TURNS ON AN ANSWERING MACHINE.

KEITH'S VOICE:

Hello, this is St. Antony's. Father John and Father Keith can not come to the phone at the moment. Please leave a message after the tone.

MUSIC UNDERSCORES MESSAGES.

WOMAN'S VOICE:

Hello. Father John, my name is Clare Armitage. It's about my daughter, she disappeared three weeks ago and I can't get the police to do anything. No one seems to care. Some one gave me your name. Told me you can sometimes help in cases like this. Please call me on...

THE MESSAGES BEGIN TO OVERLAP AND FADE INTO ONE ANOTHER.

MAN'S VOICE:

Father John, Its Mark Oakin here, we spoke last week, about my brother. Please is there any news? can you give us any hope?

ANOTHER WOMAN:

It's been two months now, he can't have vanished.

ANOTHER MAN:

I've been to the police. They're absolutely inundated. They never have time to even talk to me.

SPOTLIGHT TIGHTENS ON JOHN'S FACE.

WOMAN:

What is happening in this city? Please don't ignore this call. I just want her back. Everyone is ignoring my calls.

WOMAN:

My husband's name is Eddie Simon, About five feet eight inches tall, fair hair.

MAN:

My wife and I don't have much money but God knows, you can have it all, if only you can get our son back.

WOMAN:

He was wearing a navy blue turtle neck jumper, Oh and his watch, that was distinctive, It was my anniversary present to him.

MAN:

Please help. You're my only hope.

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WOMAN:

Please. You've got to help me.

MUSIC OUT.

BRENDAN'S VOICE:

John, This is Brendan. great news bruv. You're going to be an Uncle. Call me when you can.

LIGHTS UP AGAIN. KEITH IS THERE.

JOHN:

Did we give them the slip?

KEITH:

For the time being. What am I going to do with you?

THEY EMBRACE. JOHN PULLS AWAY.

JOHN:

Why won't anyone listen?

KEITH:

They listened. We all listened. Can't you get it in to your head, there is no monster?

JOHN:

He's out there. I've seen him.

KEITH:

No no, you haven't. I don't know what you saw that night but there is no demonic killer stalking the streets of this city.

JOHN:

But you answer the phone, the people come to the church, you see them, hear the stories.

KEITH:

This is a big city, people disappear all the time, for many, many reasons. You've turned the centre into a haven for anyone that can't face that. It's interfering with the rehab work. Can't you see, we're in a very volatile position? You're drawing attention to us. I don't have to tell you the shit we'd be in, if it ever got out that we were lovers.

JOHN:

These are real people. They need our support.

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SUPPORT. Yes support. Of course they do. I wish I had one hundred pairs of ears , a thousand soothing words.

JOHN:
They don't want soothing words. They want an answer.

KEITH:
You don't have an answer. You have a fairy tale.

JOHN:
There is a demon picking off wives, husbands, relatives, lovers and no one cares. No one is doing anything about it.

KEITH:
Because it doesn't exist. It can't. How many distraught people have you brought through our home? Some of them, I grant you, have real tragedies to tell but the rest of them have simply had the people they love walk out on them. You're encouraging them to see some mystery in, what is sadly, a very every day occurrence. It's you that has created this myth. You are feeding on people's fears to justify your own crackpot theories.

JOHN:
Crackpot! I'm trying to provide an answer for people who've suddenly had the heart ripped out of their lives.

KEITH:
Hundreds of people. What kind of creature do you suppose can dispose of hundreds of people?

JOHN:
I don't know how it operates. But I saw it kill a man and feed on the body, you know this. It came after me, eyes glowing red, I ran to you for my life. You saw the state I was in that night?

KEITH:
Yes, yes but the fact remains. that there was no body.

JOHN:
Obviously, it eats everything.

KEITH:
Oh obviously!

JOHN:
But the victim had been reported missing. Like all the rest. There's a pattern. if I can just convince the authorities there's a pattern.

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KEITH:

No, listen to me. You mustn't show your face for a long time. Otherwise they're going to lock you away. What about your brother? Couldn't you go and stay with him until this dies down?

JOHN:

(REMINDING) He called. He's going to be a father.

KEITH:

That's great. That's wonderful. You see that's a perfect excuse.

JOHN:

That makes it all the more urgent that we track this thing down. How can we bring children into all this? I can't stop until it's destroyed.

KEITH:

NO! Listen to me, please. I love you. I don't want them to lock you away.

JOHN:

That won't happen. I'll go underground but I have to destroy it.

KEITH:

The only thing you're going to destroy is us.

JOHN:

I want some support from you.

KEITH:

I am supporting you. I am telling you, you have to stop this now.

JOHN:

I have to believe my own eyes. You've got to allow me that. I have to believe I'm not going mad.

KEITH:

You need to get things in perspective. Take a break. We've been working here for eight long years, day and night. Something like this was bound to happen.

JOHN:

You think I'm cracking up.

KEITH:

OF COURSE YOU'RE CRACKING UP! YOU'RE SEEING DEMONS! Just get away for a few weeks. That's all I'm asking you. I promise you'll see things differently then.

JOHN:

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I'm not cracking up.

KEITH:
The song John.

JOHN:
What song?

KEITH:
When you came back that night, you said you heard it singing.

JOHN:
I did.

KEITH:
What was it singing?

JOHN:
That's not important.

KEITH:
Shall I remind you?

JOHN:
No.

KEITH:
Shall I remind you?

JOHN:
No. I..

KEITH:
It was from Oklahoma wasn't it. John?

JOHN:
Yes.

KEITH:
That little detail seems to have been forgotten.

JOHN:
What are you trying to say?

KEITH:
I am trying to say that I believe you think that you saw, what you say you saw but it is so much easier to believe in stress than a cannibalistic demon singing "Surrey with a

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Fringe on Top".

Look, I have to leave now. I'm late for the school board. Please stay in doors. We'll talk further later.

JOHN:

Keith I understand how you feel. Of course I do but if I can't believe my own eyes...

(FRIGHTENED BY A SUDDEN THOUGHT) You're going to the school? Don't walk across the park on your own!

KEITH:

Are you joking? Thank's to you I'm jumping at my own shadow.

Have you seen the sun set tonight? It's like the sky's bleeding? There's going to be another storm.

THE LOW RUMBLE OF THUNDER.

END OF SCENE

MUSIC.

JOHN, BEDRAGGLED AND FILTHY FROM THE CHASE, EMERGES CAUTIOUSLY. DANGER ALL AROUND HIM. HE IS CARRYING A HUGE CRUCIFIX.

JOHN:

(VOICE OVER) My love, when you return. I shall not be there.

Am I mad?

I can not live with the uncertainty and so I shall not return until I know for certain whether what I saw on that terrible night was real or no.

And if this thing exists then I will kill it or it will kill me.

People do not just disappear. Neither will I.

If I am not at your side when you wake tomorrow morning, convinced of my insanity, or having destroyed the creature, then you must assume it has killed me, there will be no other explanation.

WE HEAR AMPLIFIED OVER THE LOUD SPEAKERS THE DEMONS BREATH.

JOHN SPINS ROUND TO FACE THE SOUND.

MUSIC IS GOING CRAZY.

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ALL WE CAN SEE ARE TWO EYES FLASHING RED IN THE DARKNESS.

JOHN HOLDS ALOFT THE CRUCIFIX.

JOHN:

In the name of the Father, The Son, and The Holy Ghost, by all that still remains good and pure at the heart of our city, by the love that one person can still hold for another, by everything that you have destroyed, I challenge you to a fight to the death.

A GREAT CLAP OF THUNDER AND LIGHTENING.

JOHN LOOKS UP IN HORROR.

LIGHTS BLACKOUT.

THE SOUND OF A MIGHTY BRANCH OF A TREE, SNAPPING AND FALLING TO THE GROUND.

END OF SCENE.

KEITH IN THE CHURCH.

KEITH:

Members of the church, When lightening struck the tree which killed Father John, We lost a valued member of the community. A fearless fighter who believed that every one deserves a chance in life, no matter how poor, how apparently powerless, no matter that their bodies be riddled with drugs or that the rest of the world had given up listening.

I lost not only that crusader but the man I loved.

When he came to see that I burned with a longing, not only for mortal flesh, which would have been terrible enough, but ached for him, the flesh of my own sex, he did not revile me. Instead he came to love me in return, body and soul and recognize that the purity of that love was a gift from God that would be the bed rock of all the good we could achieve together.

He was the most wonderful, caring, crazy, infuriatingly irritating man I have ever met.

When he kissed me, my mouth was full of honey and he could give a blow job that had to be the closest we could ever come to heaven here on earth....

(DROPS HIS VOICE) John, what on earth am I going to say at your funeral. You stupid bastard! Wasn't there enough shit for us to fight without you going out in a thunder storm to chase shadows?

THERE IS A CRASH OFF.

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Who's there! Who is it?

WE HEAR, VERY LOW, VERY SINISTER, THE DEMON'S VOICE. IT SEEMS, WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY, TO BE SINGING A NUMBER FROM THE MUSICAL "CALL ME MADAME."

THE VOICE:

"I hear singing but there's no one there."

KEITH:

Hello! Can I help you?

LONG PAUSE. KEITH IS RATHER FRIGHTENED.

THE DEMON'S VOICE:

(IT'S HAVING REAL DIFFICULTY NOW)

"I hear...."

"I hear...."

KEITH:

(NERVOUSLY HELPS OUT) " I hear singing but-

THE VOICE:

"-There's no one there"

LONG PAUSE:

KEITH:

Please show yourself?

LONG PAUSE. KEITH PEERS INTO THE DARKNESS AROUND HIM.

Please.

"I smell blossom..."

THE VOICE:

"But the trees are bare-"

KEITH:

"All day long I seem to walk on air-"

TOGETHER:

"I wonder why, I wonder why."

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KEITH:

"Can't stop tossing in my sleep at night-"

THE VOICE:

"And what's more I've lost my appetite"

TOGETHER:

"Stars's that used to twinkle in the sky, Now twinkle in my eyes I wonder why.

THERE IS A BLAST FROM THE ORGAN.

KEITH JUMPS.

SILENCE.

ANOTHER BLAST. MORE PERSISTENT THIS TIME. PROMPTING KEITH,
TERRIFIED, TO

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NOW REPEAT THE VERSE, WHILST THE DEMON, WITH GROWING CONFIDENCE, SINGS THE ETHEL MERMAN PART OVER THE TOP ACCOMPANIED BY THE ORGAN.

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KEITH:

I hear singing but
There's no one there.
I smell blossom but
The trees are bare.
All day long I seem
To walk on air,
I wonder why,
I wonder why.

Can't stop tossing
In my sleep at night,
And what's more,
I've lost my appetite.
Star's that used to twinkle
In the sky, now twinkle
In my eyes, I wonder why.

THE VOICE:

You don't need analysing,
It is not so surprising,
That you feel very strange,
But nice.
Your heart goes pitter patter
I know just what's the matter,
Because I've been there once or
Twice

Put your head on my shoulder,
You need someone who's older
A rub down with a velvet glove
There is nothing you can take
To relieve that pleasant ache,
You're not sick,
You're just in love.

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KEITH:

Oh my god! It's you isn't it? You're real. He was right!

(SINGS) "Don't you hurry, little surrey-

THE VOICE:

"With the fringe on the Top"

KEITH:

Shit!

AND HE RUNS FOR HIS LIFE.

END OF SCENE.

THE HOUSE. KEITH IS SCRABBLING THROUGH A BOX OF JOHN'S BELONGINGS.

KEITH:

Where are they. I could have sworn this is where you kept your notes.

HE PULLS OUT A PIECE OF PAPER.

(READS) "Keith, in case I don't return I have posted all my notes to my twin brother Brendan, so he may have the means to protect his child"

Shit! shit!

BLACKOUT.

LOUD BURST OF "SURREY WITH THE FRINGE ON TOP"

HUNDREDS OF MILES AWAY BRENDAN, JOHN'S IDENTICAL TWIN BROTHER, ON THE TELEPHONE.

BRENDAN:

Hello Hal, it's BrendanYes I'm at the Hospital now. It's a girl... Juliet.. yes, she's an angel. Six pounds and six ounces, absolutely perfect. Helen's sleeping. They're coming home tomorrow.

Listen I think I've cracked it. I've got a brilliant idea for my new novel.

Yes I know that's what I said the last time.

Forget "The Tomb Spews Forth" this one is going to wipe that right out of the public's mind, the critics'll go crazy. It's going to be another "Ghoul school".

WE SEE THE DEMON. HE SETTLES ON A PARK BENCH. AND UNWRAPS A

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SANDWICH. HE CHOMPS.

BRENDAN:

(CONTINUES) You read about my brother? Killed by a falling branch in a thunder storm? The funeral's next week. Terrible, terrible freak accident, chance in a million. Anyway that same day he'd posted me some kind of weird transcript. It's the notes for a novel. A horror novel...

Yeah, I guess he thought it ran in the family... It's all very loose, but inside it there is the germ of an absolutely incredible idea. Some sort of creature that destroys whole cities, countries, eats its way into the soul of the place, literally eats!.... Fuck Silence of the Lambs! This thing banquets. And no one can do anything about it because it never leaves any evidence behind it.

John's sort of cast himself as the hero in all of this.

Don't you see we would be writing it together, the Hardachre Twins, one of them dead, the other channelling his work into a tribute that will chill the world.

Jonathan Ross will go mental over it.

So Hal what about an advance.. When I deliver? but... What do you mean, people don't trust me... I've cut down on the drinking.. Hal... Hal...

BUT HAL HAS HUNG UP.

BLACKOUT.

BRENDAN AND HELEN WITH THE BABY.

HELEN:

They want to give her a spell in an incubator.

BRENDAN:

Why, what's wrong with her?

HELEN:

Oh nothing, nothing at all. A touch of jaundice that's all.

BRENDAN:

What!

HELEN:

It's very common. the doctor says to think of it like giving her a go under the sun lamp. She'll be as right as rain.

BRENDAN:

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How are you feeling?

HELEN:

Tired. I'm going to stay in hospital tonight with Julie but really.. things couldn't have gone smoother. I can't wait for us all to be at home. Who'd have thought we could have made something so wonderful?

BRENDAN:

I can't believe it. Look at the way she's twitching her nose.

HELEN:

(COOING TO THE BABY) Hello Julie! Hello Julie! Every thing's going to be alright now isn't it?

BRENDAN:

How do you mean?

HELEN:

Us, we've been going through a rough patch Bren, you know we have. But Julie's going to bring us together isn't she?

BRENDAN:

I'm going to be a good father I promise I will.

HELEN;

I want a good husband.

BRENDAN:

That too.

HELEN:

I love you. No more squabbling?

BRENDAN:

No more squabbling.

HELEN:

Did you phone the mums?

BRENDAN:

Yes, they'll be here this afternoon. I asked them to give us a few hours together first, as a family. I love you too. You know that don't you?

HELEN:

Yes.

BRENDAN:

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I wish..

HELEN:
What?

BRENDAN:
You know.

HELEN:
John?

BRENDAN:
Yes. He'd have been so happy for us.

HELEN:
He is happy for us. Somewhere he can see all this. He'll be.. I don't know.. He'll be Julie's guardian angel.

BRENDAN:
Do you think so?

HELEN:
Yes.

BRENDAN:
I like that idea. Julie, your uncle John's watching over you. He's going to keep you safe. She's smiling.

HELEN:
AHHHH! You see. Everything's going to be alright.

Any word from the mortgage people?

BRENDAN:
No go I'm afraid.

HELEN:
Oh Brendan!

BRENDAN:
I'll write another novel. We'll be alright.

HELEN:
Sweet heart, the novels don't pay, you know that. Not since the first one, and that's what got us into this mess. Landed us with a home we can't afford.

BRENDAN:

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The next one. The next one, though. It's going to be a smash. It's coming from an idea of John's.

HELEN:

He can't be a guardian angel to the whole family.

BRENDAN:

No but really it's a terrifying idea taken from his notes.

HELEN:

Alright, but what are we going to do in the mean time? We can't even afford proper furniture, Beanbags were fun when we moved in, but we're not kids any more.

BRENDAN:

We'll get furniture. Trust me. This one's going to be smash.

HELEN:

Yes but Brendan, In the meantime?

BRENDAN:

Beanbags.

HELEN:

Couldn't we sell? Is the market shifting at all?.

BRENDAN:

It's our home! It's Julie's home.

HELEN:

Yes I know but..

BRENDAN:

No, there's no shift in the market.

HELEN:

I want us to try.

BRENDAN:

What?

HELEN:

We'll put it on the market. Otherwise the bank will and we'll have lost everything.

BRENDAN:

We won't loose that house, we can't. Every morning as I walked to that stinking library job I'd look up at that house and tell myself one day.. And then "Ghoul School" took off and it was mine.. ours.

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HELEN:
(SHARPLY) Well, then we have to work out some way of paying this months mortgage!

SOMEONE OFF STAGE MAKES THE SOUND OF JULIE CRYING.

HELEN:
(COMFORTING JULIE) Oh there, there!

BRENDAN:
It'll be alright I promise.

HELEN:
There, there!

THEY BEND OVER THE BABY.

BEHIND THEM A LOCKER DOOR SWINGS SLOWLY OPEN REVEALING THE DEMON, BLOOD DRIPPING FROM IT'S MOUTH, DRESSED AS A FEMALE NURSE.

THE DEMON IS MAKING THE SOUND OF THE BABY CRYING. IT HAS A CRUEL LOOKING KNIFE RAISED ABOVE IT'S HEAD, READY TO PLUNGE INTO THE BACK OF BRENDAN'S NECK.

HELEN:
(SOFTLY HUMS THE TUNE TO EDELWEISS)

THE DEMON IS TRANSFIXED. IT STOPS THE CRYING.

There, there. Sssh little Julie.

BABY STOPS.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE DEMON'S FACE.

THE DEMON:
Julie!

BLACK OUT. END OF SCENE.

LYDIA, A YOUNG DOCTOR, PASSING JULIE'S INCUBATOR.

LYDIA:
(CALLS) Nurse! Nurse!

NOTICES JULIE

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Hello. Who are you?

CONSULTS NAME TAG.

Juliet. You're very bright and alert aren't you?

PASSES HER FINGER ACROSS JULIE'S LINE OF VISION.

(STARTLED) Oh my god!

SHE TAKES OUT A LITTLE LIGHT ON THE END OF A PEN AND WAVES IT AROUND. IT SEEMS THAT JULIE FOLLOWS IT.

Amazing. I think we'd better go and talk to your mummy.

LYDIA PICKS UP JULIE AND TAKES HER OUT.

THE DEMON ENTERS. THIS TIME DRESSED AS A SURGEON.

IT IS CARRYING A HEART AS A PRESENT FOR JULIE. IT OFFERS IT SHYLY.

THE DEMON:

Julie.

BUT OF COURSE SHE ISN'T THERE. IT LOOKS CONFUSED, ANGRY THEN SAD.

Julie.

IT WANDERS SADLY OUT.

BLACK OUT.

HELEN WITH LYDIA AND JULIE IN THE MATERNITY WARD.

HELEN:

But she's so small, how can you tell?

LYDIA:

Well, we can't of course. Not yet. Not entirely. But the way she responds to movement and light it's quite extra-ordinary. There's no denying she is incredibly intelligent.

HELEN:

Wait till I tell Brendan.

LYDIA:

Look, this is rather a crusade of mine. I don't think enough attention is paid to

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developing gifted children early enough.

HELEN:
(LAUGHING) She's a day old!

LYDIA:
Yes, but would you mind if I ran a few very simple tests?

HELEN:
Oh I don't know.

LYDIA:
Please. Again and again we read about the mistakes that are made in the development of gifted children. When are you due to go home?

HELEN:
Tomorrow.

LYDIA:
Why don't you stay in an extra day so I can take a close look at Juliet's behaviour patterns. If we do have a case here of a superior intelligence and we can recognize it early enough it could influence the rest of her life.

HELEN:
Hold on a minute your making her sound like some sort of a freak.

LYDIA:
Oh I'm sorry that's the last thing I meant. I've looked at her notes she's a very healthy, strong, beautiful little baby. It's simply that if she was special in the way we talked about there's so much we could do for her.

HELEN:
I don't know. I'll have to talk to my husband about it.

LYDIA:
Of course, of course. I'm sorry I didn't mean to frighten you.

HELEN:
No, I'm flattered you're interested in Julie.

LYDIA:
Please think about what I've said.

HELEN:
I want to do what's best for her, though I must say.. the thought of spending another day in here. I was looking forward to.. well, showing her her room. We decorated it with the last of our savings.. and around the house... and.. well it can wait another day I

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suppose.

LYDIA:

No, no it mustn't, I'm being very selfish. Look, I finish my rounds at Midnight why don't I take a look at Julie then. When are you feeding her?

HELEN:

Half past twelve.

LYDIA:

Perfect. I could collect her after that. Though you must talk to your husband about it first, of course.

HELEN:

No please. I'm sure he'd want to help you all he could. Please go ahead.

LYDIA:

And we'll get you both home to that nursery in the morning.

HELEN:

Won't you be very tired? at the end of your rounds and everything.

LYDIA:

I'll be alright. I don't mind telling you I'm very excited about this.

THEY BOTH LOOK DOWN AT THE BABY IN HELEN'S ARMS.

She's so beautiful.

END OF SCENE

BRENDAN AT HOME (A BEANBAG, A RUG) LOOKING PATHETIC IN A PAPER PARTY HAT. HE'S BROWSING THROUGH A PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM. A HALF EMPTY BOTTLE OF SCOTCH AT HIS SIDE. HE HAS OBVIOUSLY BEEN DRINKING A LOT. HE GULPS FROM HIS GLASS DURING THE FOLLOWING.

BRENDAN:

John, celebrate with me.

I've never felt so alone.

I want to celebrate.

(LOOKS AT ALBUM) Look at us, like some camera trick we are, identical in dad's arms.

I wish you could have been around to see me hold Julie in my arms for the first time. They're saying at the hospital she might be special, super intelligent or something.

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There's a doctor doing tests. I'm so proud. You would have been proud of me.

Or would you?

You would have made a great father but now I'm going to do that for both of us. Like dad was. but dad made sure there was a roof over our head. what am I going to do bruv? I've been through and through everything again today. I just don't know how we're going to make ends meet. What would you have done? you'd have known what to do.

Poor Helen, poor Julie they ended up with the stupid one.

END OF SCENE

CROSS FADE TO A ROOM AT THE HOSPITAL.

LYDIA IS ON THE TELEPHONE.

LYDIA:

Hello... security? This is Dr Grace. Come to the special baby unit immediately. Something, s terrible's happened. A child I was running some tests on.. I think... I think she's been stolen.

SHE CATCHES SIGHT OF SOMETHING OFF STAGE.

Hey you! Stop! What do you think you're doing with that baby?

SHE RUNS TOWARDS WHO EVER IT IS BUT STOPS DEAD IN HER TRACKS. SHE STARES IN AMAZEMENT. HER EYES FOLLOW WHAT SHE SEES UPWARDS AND OVER HER HEAD.

Oh my God!

SHE CALLS UP INTO THE SKY.

Come back!

BLACKOUT ON HER.

THE DEMON AND JULIE SPIN AMONGST THE STARS, LAUGHING AND GURGLING WITH JOY. BELOW THEM THE LIGHTS OF THE CITY SPARKLE LIKE A BEAUTIFUL TOY.

THEY LOOK DOWN. THE DEMON POINTS OUT SOME FEATURES.

THE DEMON:

Houses, cars, church - bad men, doggy.

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JULIE STARTS TO CRY.

THE DEMON CAN'T BARE FOR HER TO BE UNHAPPY.

HE HUGS HER TO HIM.

HE OFFERS HER HIS FINGER. SHE SUCKS IT.

THE DEMON:

Julie hungry.

BLACK OUT ON THE DEMON LOOKING THOUGHTFUL.

A WHILE LATER IN THE HOSPITAL GROUNDS LYDIA ENTERS WITH JULIE.

LYDIA:

Thank God I've found you.

What am I going to tell security?

"Well.. it's like this.. They just took off. Flew. the creature and the baby. Up.. Up... They flew.. you see and..."

What will people say. I can't tell anyone about this. No one. I'll be struck off. They'll think I'm crazy.

Only five more hours and this shift will be over. I'll go home, rest, forget all about it. Pretend it never happened. It didn't happen. how could it have.

THE TUNE OF TOP HAT AND TAILS PLAYS BUT LOW, DISCHORDINATE, OMINOUS.

THE DEMON DANCES ON. HE CATCHES HER UP IN HIS DANCE AND WHIRLS HER OFF.

IN THE BLACKOUT HER TERRIBLE SCREAM.

END OF SCENE.

BRENDAN AT HIS HOUSE. HE IS VERY DRUNK.

THE DOOR BELL RINGS.

BRENDAN:

Not the mortgage people at this time of night.

(HE SHOUTS) Leave me alone! Let me get drunk in my own house while I can still call

SUCCULENCE

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it that.

BUT THE BELL RINGS AGAIN.

BRENDAN GROANS AND STAGGERS OVER TO ANSWER IT.

IT IS KEITH. HE IS STUNNED BY BRENDAN'S RESEMBLANCE TO JOHN.

BRENDAN:

Who are you? Don't you know how late it is?

KEITH:

I'm sorry... I didn't think. I was a friend of your brother John.

BRENDAN:

Oh... well... you'd better come in.

THEY MOVE INTO THE ROOM.

KEITH:

Forgive me, I'm a little shocked. I knew he had a twin brother but I wasn't quite prepared for.. I mean the way you run your fingers through your hair, everything.

BRENDAN:

Do I still do that? I tried so hard to train myself not to do that.

KEITH:

You did?

BRENDAN:

Put it this way, it wasn't always easy being mistaken for a saint.

KEITH:

He wasn't quite that.

BRENDAN:

No. Did you know him well?

KEITH:

Um, yes, yes, I think I did.

BRENDAN:

I'm afraid we don't have a lot of furniture yet but make yourself as comfortable as you can

KEITH:

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(SITTING ON THE CARPET) It's rather fun.

BRENDAN:

We used to think so. I'm sorry, the place is such a mess, my wife's just had a baby.

KEITH:

Yes I know, congratulations. How are they?

BRENDAN:

Incredibly well, both of them. The doctors says it couldn't have gone smoother. Julie, my daughter, God, it feels strange saying that!, Julie, my daughter is coming home tomorrow, Oh God! I've got to get the house together.

KEITH:

Our house is a mess, the one we shared, John and I. I just can't seem to find a reason to clean it.

BRENDAN:

The bachelor look, eh?

KEITH:

Yes.

I miss John.

BRENDAN:

Did it sound rather harsh, what I said back then about training myself not to be like him?

KEITH:

Not really.

BRENDAN:

Would you like a drink?

KEITH:

No thank you.

BRENDAN:

Oh of course, you're a priest aren't you?.

KEITH:

It's not that, I'm not very good at keeping the rules believe me. No, I've been drinking rather a lot recently. I want to try and get myself together.

BRENDAN:

Good idea. I'm out of my fucking head. Oh sorry.

SUCCULENCE

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KEITH:
That's alright, I swear.

BRENDAN:
Do you.

KEITH:
Yes.

I shouldn't have come round this late.

BRENDAN:
That's alright, I'm glad you did. I was trying to celebrate. Not much fun on your own.

KEITH:
Hence the hat.

BRENDAN:
(REMEMBERING THE PAPER HAT ON HIS HEAD)
Oh yes, how embarrassing.

HE GOES TO TAKE IT OFF

KEITH:
(GENTLY) leave it, if it makes you feel good.

BRENDAN:
There's another somewhere.

KEITH:
(SADLY) No. No thank you.

BRENDAN:
So you knew my brother, eh?

Everybody always expected I would be as clever as him, as brave as him, as sensitive as him. I wasn't. I couldn't be, so I tried to make myself seem as different to him as possible. It didn't work of course, people go on physical appearance and physically they didn't see me, they saw John in slightly scruffier clothes or John with his hair parted in a different way. That's why in the end I had to get away. Become a separate person.

KEITH:
It's just I've always had this idea that twins were inseparable.

BRENDAN:
We were really. Sometimes I'd avoid his calls for months on end, wrench myself away but when we did talk, what he said held no surprises for me. Every day I could sense

SUCCULENCE

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his moods.

KEITH:
Read his mind?

BRENDAN:
Almost. We had no secrets.

KEITH:
No?

BRENDAN:
No.

KEITH:
What about me.

BRENDAN:
You?

KEITH:
Did he ever mention me? Did you sense me?

BRENDAN:
It wasn't that specific. As I say it was more about moods, feelings rather than specifics. Whether he was tired, happy, depressed. That sort of thing.

KEITH:
In love? Could you tell if he was in love.

BRENDAN:
Well, yes I suppose that would have come through. He could tell when I'd met Helen. I remember quite distinctly. He said "You've met someone haven't you? Some one special"

KEITH:
And at the end? In his last few days could you sense anything unusual.

BRENDAN:
I was very ill at the time, terrible migraines.

Helen says he'll be Julie's guardian angel. I like that idea. She's going to need one.

KEITH:
You read his notes then?

BRENDAN:

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You know about them?

KEITH:

Yes.

BRENDAN:

Aren't they wonderful?

KEITH:

Wonderful?

BRENDAN:

If I can just save the house in the meantime.

KEITH:

The house?

BRENDAN:

We can't keep up the mortgage.

KEITH:

I'm sorry to hear that. Lots of my congregation are in the same position. Renting out their spare rooms to make ends meet.

BRENDAN:

What?

KEITH:

Renting out a room to help pay the mortgage?

BRENDAN:

Of course! Why didn't I think of that? Rent out a room. A lodger. What a great idea!

KEITH STARES AT BRENDAN AND THINKS OF JOHN.

KEITH:

I think I will have that drink if you don't mind.

BLACKOUT.

A DESOLATE WASTELAND SOMEWHERE

THE DEMON FEEDS JULIE A LUMP OF FLESH.

THE CARE AND TENDERNESS IS QUITE MOVING.

HE ROCKS HER TO SLEEP.

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THE DEMON:

(SOFTLY) Take Julie home now.

BLACKOUT ON THEM.

MEANWHILE BACK WITH KEITH AND BRENDAN, BRENDAN LYING, HIS FACE AWAY FROM US.

KEITH:

They say it's the worse time don't they, late at night, for missing someone. I miss your brother so much.

I had to speak at his funeral, you know? I don't know how I got through that. I got a stone in my shoe, I just kept pressing my foot into that to stop myself from crying. when I got home my sock was soaking in blood.

I had to do that you see, so I didn't show any feeling. We're not supposed to show feelings. Just accept God's will, ... but... but.... I just can't. I don't understand.

Was it punishment for what we were? I can't believe that, if it was, why did God give us so many happy times together? if what we did was evil, why did so much good come out of it? Sorry I'm ranting on ... I'm sorry, it's just I haven't been able to talk to anyone and I feel I can talk to you.

Well, that's silly really isn't it? I don't know you, but you look so much like him, it's like he's here with me again.

I loved him, you know, your brother.... we were lovers.

All that time I spent comforting all those people he did good work for and I kept thinking to myself, "what the fuck have you got to feel so sorry about? You can go back now to your husband or your wife and I have to go home to what? The baby Jesus? Don't you understand I want to scream? I don't want to be hear spouting this platitudinous shit to you bastards, You drove him off the rails searching for Demon's to explain away your inadequacies. I just want to cry and I want someone to hold me. I haven't lost a cardboard saint that you listen to on a sunday, or take a mug of soup from or who talks you through going cold turkey. I've lost a part of me. I am no longer whole.. I... I..".

Oh shit!

I.. please, you won't tell any of this to the church will you?

You see if they found out we could loose everything we worked for. We're only holding on to the grant for the rehab centre by the skin of our teeth. Please..

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THERE IS A LONG PAUSE.

WE BECOME AWARE OF BRENDAN'S SNORES.

KEITH:

Thank you God. Thank you. Forgive me please for the dreadful things I've said. For the terrible doubts I've had.

HE LOOKS ACROSS AT BRENDAN.

KEITH:

Why did you have to look so much like him?

HE CRADLES HIM IN HIS ARMS.

HE CRIES SOFTLY.

HE TAKES BRENDAN'S FACE TO HIS AND KISSES HIM ON THE MOUTH.

STILLNESS.

THE DEMON ENTERS CARRYING JULIE.

HE SEES KEITH.

THE DEMON:

Church in Julie's house, bad man, hurt Julie.

KEITH:

(BACKING AWAY) It's you isn't it? I can smell you. What are you doing with that baby.

THE DEMON PLACES JULIE GENTLY WITH THE SLEEPING BRENDAN AND HURLS HIMSELF ON TO KEITH.

HE BEGINS TO STRANGLE HIM.

THE DEMON SINKS HIS TEETH INTO THE SIDE OF KEITH'S FACE.

KEITH FALLS TO THE FLOOR.

THE GHOST OF JOHN ENTERS, BADLY DECOMPOSING, THERE IS TREE GROWING OUT OF HIM. HE IS BRANDISHING A CRUCIFIX.

THE DEMON SCREAMS IN FRUSTRATION.

JOHN DRIVES HIM OUT.

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ON THE FLOOR, JOHN TAKES KEITH IN HIS ARMS. THE SIDE WHERE THE DEMON BIT IS AWAY FROM US.

JOHN:

Don't die, fight it! Come on fight it! Come on!

KEITH JOLTS OUT OF JOHN'S ARMS ROLLING ON TO THE FLOOR. HE CLUTCHES THE SIDE OF HIS FACE.

KEITH STAGGERS TO A MIRROR.

HE TAKES HIS HAND AWAY FROM THE WOUND.

KEITH:

Ahhhhhhhh! My face! my face!

HE STUMBLES OUT OF THE HOUSE.

BLACKOUT.

BRENDAN ON THE PHONE AT HOME. HELEN IN THE HOSPITAL.

BRENDAN:

Helen?

HELEN:

Brendan is that you?

BRENDAN:

Helen what's happened?

HELEN:

It's Julie, she's disappeared. They can't find her any where. Oh Brendan they think someone might have stolen her.

BRENDAN:

She's here.

HELEN:

What?

BRENDAN:

She's here. I woke up this morning and she was asleep on top of me.

HELEN:

She's with you?

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BRENDAN:
Yes.

HELEN:
And she's safe?

BRENDAN:
Right as rain.

HELEN:
But how did she get home?

BRENDAN:
God knows. There was a priest here, a friend of John's, maybe he knows something.

HELEN:
Well, didn't you hear anyone come or leave or..

BRENDAN:
I was sleeping heavily.

HELEN:
You were drunk.

BRENDAN:
No.

HELEN:
Brendan!

BRENDAN:
Alright, yes I was drunk.

HELEN:
You're a father now. when are you going to grow up. we nearly lost our baby last night and you were shit faced.

BRENDAN:
I'm sorry. Well, thank god she's safe.

HELEN:
Hungry?

BRENDAN:
No she doesn't seem to be.

HELEN:

SUCCULENCE

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But it's hours since her last feed.

BRENDAN:

Look hang on, I'll come and fetch you.

HELEN:

No, I'll get a cab. You keep Julie safe.

BLACK OUT.

BRENDAN IN THE LIVING ROOM. HELEN ENTERS FROM UPSTAIRS.

HELEN:

Well, she's fast asleep now. What did the police say.

BRENDAN:

They just asked routine questions. That detective thinks I brought her home, I can see he does. They're still trying to find that doctor but there's no victim, I can't see them spending much time on it.

HELEN:

Did you tell them about the priest?

BRENDAN:

Oh no, I forgot.

HELEN:

Brendan, that could be important.

BRENDAN:

He was here with me the whole time.

HELEN:

How would you know? You were in Jack Daniel's land.

BRENDAN:

Well, she's safe and well, that's the main thing.

HELEN:

Yes I suppose so. I think she's in shock, she just doesn't seem to be hungry.

BRENDAN:

Well, I'm sure when she is we'll be the first to know.

THE DOORBELL RINGS.

HELEN:

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The police again?

BRENDAN GOES TO ANSWER THE DOOR. IT'S SIMON FLYNN. RAPIDLY SLIMING UP THE CAREER LADDER AT ALLIED BANK.

SIMON:
Mr Hardachre?

BRENDAN:
Yes.

SIMON:
I'm Mr Flynn, your financial adviser.

BRENDAN:
I don't have a financial adviser?

SIMON:
You do, as of this morning. Our Manager Mr Sprigs took a look at your Mortgage payments and said "Ah ha! what the Hardachre's need is a visit from a financial adviser and Flynn is the very man for the job. May I come in. (HE DOESN'T WAIT FOR AN ANSWER) Mrs Hardachre?

HELEN:
Yes.

SIMON:
Delighted to meet you. Actually Mr Hardachre, I'm a bit of a fan. Ghoul School what a terrific novel? Loved it. I'll never be able to look an Embryo in the face again. I do a bit of writing myself actually, only in an amateur capacity of course but, well I've got rather high hopes for my new one. I wonder if you might get a chance to take a look at it. Well, "them" in actual fact, It's a trilogy. Agents and Publishers have, so far, I'll admit been a little bit short sighted with them.

BRENDAN:
Really who did you send it to?

SIMON:
I opened the directory and just started at the A's.

BRENDAN:
Where are you up to?

SIMON:
I have big hopes for Zackery's. OK. so they mainly do Medical textbooks but at some stage they're going to want to branch out and there's a wonderful scene with a rabid surgeon.

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BRENDAN:

Just a minute. There's a rabid surgeon in my *The Tomb Spews Forth*.

SIMON:

I know, think of it as a kind of a homage. In fact many of the publishers have pointed out a marked similarity in many of our plot lines. Spooky huh? So I thought if you could maybe give it a flick through and maybe come up with some kind of testimony for the cover, nothing too flash, Simon Flynn is my worthy successor, something like that it might just tip the balance.

HELEN:

My husband does not need a successor worthy or otherwise. He is about to bring out his finest novel.

SIMON:

Oh right, of course that'll be due out on Monday I imagine?

BRENDAN:

Why Monday?

SIMON:

Well, if they rush it to the shops you may just be able to earn this month's mortgage payment. I'm sure you'll agree the bank have been more than sympathetic, partly I must admit through my efforts in promoting your novels in the office but alas there is a limit to the charms, even of your piranhas in the paddling pool sequence. Unfortunately, should you miss the next payment we will have no alternative but to repossess.

HELEN:

But we've just had a baby.

SIMON:

How lovely, Mrs Flynn and I have been thinking of starting a family.

BRENDAN:

We'll have the money.

SIMON:

I'm sure you will Mr Hardachre but just in case it might be worth considering an alternative strategy.

BRENDAN:

What strategy?

SIMON:

Well, there are certain... loans available. In special cases. We have to be so careful because the interest rates could be crippling for the wrong people but with your

SUCCULENCE

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wonderful new novel due out soon obviously they wouldn't be a problem for you.

BRENDAN:

And you think we might be one of those special cases.

SIMON:

Well, as I say, we have to be very confident you could make the payments, these loans are entirely at the managers discretion and he's a hard man. I think I could talk him round, if you could maybe find time to scribble a few words of recommendation for my work.

HELEN:

How dare you come here and try to blackmail my husband.

SIMON:

It most certainly is not blackmail. I've been a fan of his for years, I've read every one of his books at least twenty times. I think of him as a friend and this would simply be.... two friends helping each other out. Please think about what I've said. I'll show myself out.

HE GOES.

(THROUGH THE LETTER BOX) Almost forgot to leave you my little novella. I'll call back next week. Hope that's convenient.

THREE ENORMOUS MANUSCRIPTS THUD ON TO THE DOOR MAT.

HELEN:

Come on. We'll read them in shifts. It shouldn't take too long, it sounds like we'll know the plots already

BRENDAN:

No way, am I going to read a word of that little creeps work.

HELEN:

But Bren, we need one of those loans. You'll pay it off with the next novel.

BRENDAN:

That novel is John's present to Julie and every penny of that is going to give her the best childhood a kids ever had.

HELEN:

What kind of a childhood is she going to have if we haven't got a home?

BRENDAN:

It won't come to that. The answers so simple, Father Keith suggested it, we rent out a room. The deposit and the months rent in advance will practically cover this month.

SUCCULENCE

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HELEN:

Yes! Oh yes! and I can go back to work again.

BRENDAN:

Well..

HELEN:

Why not Brendan? I'm a restaurant critic not a deep sea diver. It's the perfect solution. We'll put an advert in the paper this evening. Isn't there one from last week hanging about? Let's see how people word these things.

BRENDAN:

(LOOKING THROUGH THE PAPER) Oh no! There's pages and pages of them.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

HELEN AND BRENDAN'S ADVERT.

HELEN:

Room to rent.

BRENDAN:

Large room to rent,

HELEN:

Large, comfortable room to rent.

BRENDAN:

In friendly house.

HELEN:

To share with two lovable people.

BRENDAN:

And there baby.

HELEN:

Who doesn't cry a lot.

BRENDAN:

Absolutely not. Hardly cries at all. Wouldn't keep you awake or anything like that.

HELEN:

And it's a very sunny house.

BRENDAN:

SUCCULENCE

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But it's cool in the summer.

HELEN:

Yes, it's cool in the summer. And we've got all mod cons.

BRENDAN:

TV,

HELEN:

Microwave,

BRENDAN...TV..

HELEN:

Oh and an answering machine, we've got one of those.

BRENDAN:

Just treat it as your own. The same with the microwave.

HELEN:

And the TV.

BRENDAN:

Yes just make yourself at home.

HELEN:

But choose us.

BOTH:

PLEASE!

HELEN:

Call now!

BLACK OUT.

BRENDAN WAITING BY THE TELEPHONE, HELEN TRYING TO FEED JULIE

BRENDAN:

(CALLS UPSTAIRS TO HELEN) Anything?

HELEN:

(CALLING DOWN) No. She's still not hungry. Anyone call?

BRENDAN:

No. It looks like everyone with a mortgage has had the same idea.

SUCCULENCE

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HELEN:

I knew we should have mentioned the Bidet.

BLACK OUT.

HELEN:

Are you sure he said six thirty?

BRENDAN:

We've been through this a thousand times. Yes, but he couldn't be exact because he had eight other rooms to see.

HELEN:

But it's nearly midnight.

BRENDAN:

He'll be here.

HELEN:

You don't think you should have a look through that slime's novel while we're waiting.

BRENDAN:

NO!

HELEN:

Just in case.

BRENDAN:

NO!

HELEN:

I phoned Caroline, they've got a lodger. She say's they're like gold dust. It took them six weeks to find someone. (PAUSE) Brendan. (PAUSE) Brendan!

BRENDAN:

What?

HELEN:

We don't have six weeks.

BRENDAN:

He'll be here.

HELEN:

And he sounded nice?

SUCCULENCE

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BRENDAN:

Well, he sounded OK. I mean, how much can you tell from a phone call!

HELEN:

Don't get snappy.

BRENDAN:

I need a drink.

HELEN:

You do not need a drink.

BRENDAN:

Shouldn't you be getting Julie to eat something.

HELEN:

I've told you, the Dr. says not to worry. If she seems bright and alert leave her. she'll cry when she's hungry.

BRENDAN:

Well, that'll save us some cash - the world's first solar powered baby.

THE SOUND OF JULIE CRYING. ONCE AGAIN THIS IS MADE BY THE DEMON.

THE HARDACHRE'S LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

THEN THE DOOR BELL RINGS.

BRENDAN:

Everything's going to be alright.

HE GOES TO THE DOOR, SHE GOES OUT TO JULIE.

BRENDAN OPENS THE DOOR TO THE DEMON.

JULIE STOPS CRYING.

BRENDAN:

(HEARTILY) Hi, I'm Brendan, I believe we spoke on the phone. My wife Helen will be down in a minute, she's just attending to our baby daughter Julie.

THE DEMON:

(REPEATS) Julie

BRENDAN:

Yes, won't you come in? She's just giving her her feed. She's as good as gold. Julie that is. Well, Helen as well come to mention it. ha ha!

SUCCULENCE

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THE DEMON:
Julie hungry.

BRENDAN:
Not any more I imagine. This is the lounge obviously.

THE DEMON:
Lounge? Lounge (IT THINKS ABOUT THIS WORD) Lounge?... LUNCH! Julie.

BRENDAN:
(BEMUSED) Well, yes. A very late lunch I suppose you could say. baby's! funny things, they eat at all times of the day.

THE DEMON:
See Julie.

BRENDAN:
Would you like that? Right, yes of course. (CALLS UPSTAIRS) Darling would you bring Julie down stairs a moment she has a visitor!.

BRENDAN SMILES AT THE DEMON.

THE DEMON LOOKS CONFUSED BACK AT HIM.

THE DEMON:
Julie.

BRENDAN:
Quite so.

HELEN ARRIVES CARRYING JULIE. JULIE STARTS CRYING.

BRENDAN:
Oh dear, how odd, ha ha! We don't normally hear a peep out of her, do we darling.

HELEN:
No, no!

THE DEMON TAKES JULIE FROM HELEN, HELEN IS RATHER STARTLED.

HELEN:
Oh!

JULIE IMMEDIATELY STOPS CRYING.

THE DEMON:

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(HAPPILY REUNITED) Julie!

JULIE CHUCKLES AWAY.

HELEN:

You're obviously very good with children Mr..

BRENDAN:

Oh, I am sorry. This is my wife Helen, Helen this is Mr.. Flash? wasn't it. What do your friends call you?

THE DEMON:

(PREOCCUPIED WITH JULIE) Flash, slash, slash.

BRENDAN:

Slash! Great nick name. Darling could I have a quick word.

THEY MOVE OUT OF EARSHOT OF THE DEMON WHO ISN'T THE REMOTEST BIT INTERESTED ANYWAY.

HELEN:

You call me Darling one more time, I'm going to be sick.

BRENDAN:

He's a bit weird.

HELEN:

Well, english is obviously his second language.

BRENDAN:

Strange, he seemed quite coherent on the phone.

HELEN:

There's something funny about his eyes.

BRENDAN:

If you'd been looking at rented rooms for eight hours you'd be like that.

HELEN:

I suppose so.

BRENDAN:

So what's the problem?

HELEN:

There isn't.

SUCCULENCE

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BRENDAN:

No there is, I can tell by the tone of your voice. If your going to be this suspicious with people.

HELEN:

I'm not being suspicious, I like him.

BRENDAN:

You do?

HELEN:

Yes. Don't you?

BRENDAN:

Well, I suppose so.

HELEN:

So who's being suspicious now?

BRENDAN:

Not me.

HELEN:

You just said you weren't sure.

BRENDAN:

I did not. You think he's fine then?

HELEN:

I don't know.

BRENDAN:

Well, he clearly doesn't mind babies. It might be a while before we find someone who wants to be around a tiny baby.

HELEN:

What if he's here illegally? An immigrant.

BRENDAN:

Could be useful. He'll keep a low profile. We're not actually supposed to be doing this under the terms of the mortgage.

HELEN:

He could be ideal then?

BRENDAN:

He could be.

SUCCULENCE

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HELEN:
(EXCITEDLY) Oh Brendan!

BRENDAN:
We have to convince him to take the place yet.

THE DEMON HANDS JULIE BACK TO HELEN.

THE DEMON:
Julie's Mummy.

BRENDAN:
(HEARTILY) Well... umm Slash..

THE DEMON:
Slash!

BRENDAN:
.... Well, let me show you the rest of the house, Slash, so you can decide if you'd like to live here with us.

THE DEMON:
Julie.

BRENDAN:
Julie too of course.

THE DEMON:
Live with Julie?

HELEN:
Brendan, let me handle this. (SLOWLY) Would you like to live here with Brendan, Helen and Julie?

THE DEMON:
(EXCITEDLY) Live with Julie!

HELEN:
That's right.

THE DEMON:
Live with Julie now!

HELEN:
Now.

SUCCULENCE

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THE DEMON:
(JUMPING UP AND DOWN WITH JOY) Julie!

HELEN:
I think he wants to move in tonight.

BRENDAN:
Don't you want to see the room first.

THE DEMON:
Live with Julie!

HELEN:
The poor bastard, he's only got a few words of English, imagine how it must have been looking around all those places. he just wants some where they'll treat him kindly.

BRENDAN:
Would you like to move in tonight? I'm afraid we'll need some money.

THE DEMON:
Money? Money? Mummy! (POINTS AT HELEN) Julie's mummy!

BRENDAN:
(WAVES A BANK NOTE FROM HIS POCKET) No m-o-n-e-y. Cash.

THE DEMON THINKS THIS IS A GAME. HE TAKES THINGS OUT OF HIS POCKET ONE BY ONE AND WAVES THEM IN THE AIR IN IMITATION OF BRENDAN, SHOUTING "CASH" EACH TIME, PUTTING THEM DOWN IN FRONT OF HIM. A YO-YO, A BROKEN WATCH, A BALL OF SILVER PAPER, A STETHOSCOPE (LYDIA'S), A TELEPHONE RECEIVER, THEN A HUGE WAD OF BANK NOTES, A CIGARETTE LIGHTER...

BUT BRENDAN IS OF COURSE INTERESTED IN THE MONEY. HE POINTS TO IT.

BRENDAN:
Cash.

THE DEMON LOOKS.

THE DEMON:
Slash.

BRENDAN:
Yes. You give me.

THE DEMON THINKS ABOUT THIS.

SUCCULENCE

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SHYLY HE GIVES THE MONEY TO BRENDAN.

THEN THE WATCH TO HELEN:

HELEN:
Thank you.

AND FINALLY THE SILVER PAPER BALL TO JULIE.

THE DEMON:
Julie.

BRENDAN HAS COUNTED THE MONEY AND TRIES TO GIVE THE CHANGE BACK TO THE DEMON.

THE DEMON SNARLS.

EVERYONE IS MONETARILY TAKEN A BACK. THE DEMON SMILES.

DEMON:
Slash.

BRENDAN:
Thank you, slash.

HELEN:
You must be tired.

THE DEMON:
Julie tired.

HELEN:
Yes, I think we all are.

THE DEMON REMEMBERS SOMETHING.

HE HANDS BRENDAN A BAG HE'S BROUGHT.

BRENDAN:
Is this all your belongings? Goodness you travel lightly.

THE DEMON:
For Julie

HELEN:
What is it?

SUCCULENCE

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BRENDAN LOOKS IN THE BAG.

BRENDAN:
Video cassettes.

HE CONSULTS SOME SPINES.

All of musicals.

And one on French Cookery.

BUT THE DEMON GRABS THIS.

BRENDAN:
Not that one eh? Well, thank you, I'm sure she'll enjoy these. They're all sticky. What is this strawberry Jam?

HELEN:
I'll show Slash up to his room and then have another try at feeding Julie.

BRENDAN:
She's still not taking anything?

HELEN:
She just isn't interested.

BLACK OUT.

THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.

JULIE AND THE DEMON SAT IN FRONT OF THE TV. WATCHING THE VIDEO ON FRENCH FOOD COOKERY. THE LIGHT PLAYS ACROSS THEIR FACES.

THE VIDEO COMMENTARY:

Although widely condemned by animal welfare organization the preparation of Pate de fois gras still continues in rural areas of France. The process involves the taking of a young goose, and force feeding it a rarefied diet until its liver becomes inflamed, this is then made into a pate regarded as a delicacy for it's richness and succulence.

THE DEMON:
(REPEATS) Succulence.

HE LOOKS ACROSS AT THE BABY. THERE IS AN EVIL LOOK IN IT'S EYE.

(SLOWLY, WITH RELISH) Julie!

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BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT ONE.

SUCCULENCE

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ACT TWO

JOHN, QUITE BADLY DECOMPOSING NOW. ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE.

JOHN:

Welcome back, during the interval I've had a bit of a think and it occurs to me that things could get very out of hand here, gay clergymen, man eating demons, cannibalistic babies, I mean it's all getting a bit much.

Someone has to install some order into this production.

Now, I've decided that someone should be me, which poses a little bit of a problem because, as you may recall, I was killed by a falling tree somewhere towards the beginning of act one. But fear not. I've done a bit of reading up. Listens to this.

This is The Concise Oxford Companion To The Theatre. (READS)
AS HE CONTINUES KEITH EMERGES. HIS FACE IS ALL BANDAGED UP.

HE REMOVES THE BANDAGES.

AS HE GETS TO THE FINAL PIECE OF BANDAGE HE HOLDS UP A MIRROR IN FRONT OF HIM TO LOOK AT THE DAMAGE.

WE CAN NOT SEE, BECAUSE OF THE MIRROR.

" Chorus - characters or character who stand outside the main action of the play and comment on it, as in Aeschylus and Sophocles."

Now you really can't get much more outside the action than dead can you? So I thought I'd have a go. I hope that's alright with everyone?

I'm not entirely sure at the moment what it's going to involve but I'll keep you posted.

(READS) "Recently the chorus devise has been parodied by Max Frisch in his play "The Fire Raisers". A chorus of Firemen, comment on the actions of Herr Biderman, who, by inviting blatant terrorists in to his house, becomes an allegory for wilful ignorance, allowing destructive forces to flourish.

JOHN ROTATES KEITH TO FACE HIM.

KEITH DROPS THE MIRROR.

JOHN KISSES HIM.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

JOHN AND KEITH ARE GONE.

SUCCULENCE

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THE DEMON ENTERS, SELECTS A VIDEO AND PUTS IT ON.

IT PLAYS "GETTING TO KNOW YOU" FROM "THE KING AND I"

HELEN ENTERS.

HELEN:
Slash?

DEMON:
Slash!

HELEN:
Are you sure you don't mind baby sitting Julie tonight?

DEMON:
Julie.

HELEN:
Here's the number for the restaurant where we'll be. Slash, why isn't she ever hungry?

DEMON:
Slash feeds Julie.

HELEN:
(MISUNDERSTANDING) If you want to give it a try the bottle and everything is on the kitchen table. You're great friends, you two, aren't you? I can tell there's a real affinity there.

DEMON:
Finity

SHE EXITS.

BRENDAN IS AT HIS WORD PROCESSOR.

HE STOPS TYPING AND LOOKS AFFECTIONATELY AT JOHN'S NOTES.

BRENDAN:
Oh John, I can't help but think you had a hand in all this. Everything's going so well, We have a lodger now, so we can almost afford the mortgage and our novels going great, I'm sure Hal will give me an advance when he sees the first draft.

The doctor says, though he can't understand that Julie won't breast feed, she's one of the strongest, healthiest baby's he's ever seen.

SUCCULENCE

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Slash has fitted in so beautifully here, he seems to have an unlimited supply of money, from a job which takes him out a lot at night, though we can't get out of him exactly what it is. He's into musicals so the whole day long the house is full of singing.

Today is our second wedding anniversary. I've been so busy with our novel, and Helen with Julie that we've hardly spent a moment alone together. We're going to the little restaurant where we first met. They have a singer and you can dance. It's very romantic.

John, why am I dreading it?

HELEN ENTERS, SHE LOOKS GREAT.

HELEN:

Hurry up and get ready. The tables booked for eight.

BRENDAN:

Fine, I'm ready when you are.

HELEN:

You're going like that?

BRENDAN:

Yeh, why?

HELEN:

I just thought perhaps you'd like to dress up.

BRENDAN:

Helen, it's only Giovanni's.

HELEN:

Look, let's not bother. We can't afford this and I'm worried about Julie.

BRENDAN:

Slash can look after Julie.

HELEN:

She's not eating anything Brendan.

BRENDAN:

You know what the Dr. said. I want to take my wife out on our anniversary.

HELEN:

Do you? Why?

BRENDAN:

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I want to make a fuss of you.

HELEN:

I'm not a poodle! A bowl of Carbonara will not make everything all right.

Do you remember when we met?

BRENDAN:

Of course I do.

HELEN:

How you came over at that party and asked me if you could kiss me. Told me that you just had to kiss me.

HELEN:

I'd been watching you all evening. By the end I'd been watching you for so long and I wanted you so much I couldn't think of anything else to say. (LAUGHS) How could you fall for such a crappy line?

BRENDAN:

Because it was the most honest thing anyone had said to me all night. But mainly because you had on your black leather jacket, and I could see little tufts of hair at the neck of your tee shirt, and you had on those tight black jeans that made your packet look enormous and you stared at me with your intense dark eyes, and you spoke really slowly and quietly because you were a little bit drunk but it made you sound so passionate, like you had so much sex inside you, and I couldn't believe I hadn't noticed you and even though my boyfriend was standing six feet away from me and all my friends were stood around me, I thought "Yes, you can kiss me. I'd really like that. In fact you can do any thing to me you want." And we did kiss, didn't we Brendan? We stood there, in the middle of the party in front of all those people and we snogged, and we snogged until the room fell silent around us and everyone was looking at us and still we snogged until finally we had to come up for air with our heads spinning from lack of oxygen. And I can honestly say that from that moment I have never wanted anyone else except you.

Brendan I can't remember what that felt like. i know it was me, that kissed you at that party. I know it was me that felt all those things, but I can't remember what that feeling is like. Do you understand. Where's all that gone?

BRENDAN:

I still feel exactly the same.

HELEN:

Don't lie to me, Bren.

BRENDAN:

I'm crazy about you.

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HELEN:
kiss me then.

BRENDAN:
What?

HELEN:
Kiss me then. Show me. Kiss me like you did that night.

THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER. NEITHER MOVES.

BRENDAN:
We're going to be late for the restaurant.

SHE FOLLOWS HIM OUT.

BLACK OUT.

"GETTING TO KNOW YOU" IN AGAIN.

LIGHTS UP ON THE DEMON WATCHING THE VIDEO

THE DOOR BELL RINGS.

THE DEMON GOES TO ANSWER IT.

SIMON FLYNN BURSTS IN. THE DEMON FOLLOWS, CONFUSED.

SIMON:
Don't mind me sonny. you must be the baby sitter. I'm an old family friend. Mr and Mrs around? No? I thought I saw them going into Giovanni's. Ah well, they must have forgotten I was popping in tonight. I won't keep you, Brendan just asked me to have a read through his new manuscript. I'm a fellow author you see. Perhaps you've heard of my work? Does the name Simon Flynn mean anything to you?

THE DEMON LOOKS BLANK.

It will. Well, as I say. Brendan was expecting me, so you just forget I was ever here.

THE DEMON THINKS. HOLDS UP A HUMPTY DUMPTY TOY IN FRONT OF SIMON'S FACE.

DEMON;
Dumpty!

SIMON:

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(TAKEN A BACK MOMENTARILY) yes... well if you'll excuse me.

CROSS FADE TO BRENDAN'S DESK AREA. SIMON TAPS INTO THE WORD PROCESSOR. LIGHTS GLOW GREEN FROM THE WORD PROCESSOR ON SIMON'S FACE AND THE TV ON THE DEMONS. AS SIMON TAPS AWAY. JOHN ENTERS. HE IS READING FROM ANTIGONE.

JOHN:

Happy are they who know not the taste of evil.
From a house that heaven hath forsaken
The curse departs not
But falls upon all of the blood...
Like the restless surge of the sea when the dark storm drives
The black sand hurled from the deep,
And the thracian gales boom down
On the echoing shore.
Well was it said, evil seems good
To him who is doomed to suffer
And short is the time before that suffering comes.

JOHN RELAXES. TO THE AUDIENCE;

Well, I thought that went quite well. Not bad this chorus stuff. i'll get the hang of it in no time at all.

SIMON HAS ACCESSED BRENDAN'S NOVEL ON THE WORD PROCESSOR.

SIMON:

Ah ha!

"The sun set across the city at five pm. A great gash of a sunset, burning an angry red...."

JOHN:

Just a minute, that's the beginning of the play, we don't want to go back to that.

SIMON:

(CONTINUES READING)

"John Hardachre, dashing young Catholic priest, wrestled with his conscience, could he risk eternal damnation one more time and descend into the twilight world of the Gilded Garter Strip joint?"

JOHN:

What!

SIMON:

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"The Gilded Garter, where every night the gorgeous Greta Motevideo danced for the unfeeling brutes who craved her body but little understood her soul as John did. She was the only woman he had ever loved, through the hardship of their childhood together and on into manhood, a manhood which his calling to God would have him suppress".

JOHN:

There was nothing suppressed about my manhood, thank you very much. Ask my boyfriend. And if God had a problem he didn't tell me about it.

SIMON:

"But suppress it he could not."

JOHN:

Thank you.

SIMON:

"Any women had fallen for his charms and many would again but Greta was the only one he loved. Luring him back and back as the sirens dragged the impassioned sailors to their doom"

JOHN:

What is this crap?

KEITH ENTERS. HE IS WEARING A BLONDE WIG ABOVE HIS FACE WHICH IS BANDAGED UP WITH ONLY SLITS FOR HIS EYES AND MOUTH LIKE THE INVISIBLE MAN. HE IS DRESSED LIKE A FEMALE NIGHTCLUB SINGER.

KEITH:

Hi! Sex bomb.

JOHN:

What?

KEITH:

I said "Hi, sex bomb"

JOHN:

You look ridiculous.

KEITH:

I'm being Greta Montevideo.

JOHN:

What are you talking about?

KEITH:

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This is not us as we really were, this is us in your brothers novel.

JOHN:
And you're Greta Montevideo?

KEITH:
You'd better believe it hun.

JOHN:
Who am I?

KEITH:
Oh you're the same. With one major difference.

JOHN:
Greta Montevideo?

KEITH:
Your special girl.

JOHN:
Well.... Greta-

KEITH:
Call me "G"

JOHN:
Um... well..."G" ... This is ridiculous.

KEITH:
Oh Rosey-

JOHN:
ROSEY!

KEITH:
Yes Rosey. It's my pet name for you. It's short for rosary.

JOHN:
No!

KEITH:
I'm afraid so. Well, Rosey It was all I could do to keep smiling through my act. You see I had a dream last night that you carried me away from this city, from all the dirt and the despair and that we made a new life together in the country. Oh Rosey, it was so real, I could hear the birds singing and smell the freshly mown hay, it broke my heart to wake up to my shitty little room with out you there beside me.

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JOHN:

(VERY MACHO) I'm a priest, kid. I wish it could be some other way but someone has to clean up the streets of this city.

KEITH:

I know and I respect that and every day as you go about the Lord's work, I want you to think of me, taking my clothes off in that bar, happy to give up our life together for Jesus.

JOHN:

This is terrible. I'm a gay man. I've got something important to say. It's about saving lives. Why does it have to be wrapped up in all this?

KEITH:

You never told Brendan you were gay. When I visited him he had no idea who I was.

JOHN:

He has my notes. He could have read between the lines.

KEITH:

Why should he. You never thought being out would help you.

JOHN;

No one takes any notice of what gay people think.

KEITH:

So we lied. To our families, every one.

JOHN:

We had no choice. We couldn't risk it.

KEITH

It looks like your stuck with Greta, Rosie.

JOHN:

Stop it! Don't call me that! And take off that outfit. It's horrible. It's a travesty. It's not real. It's not one thing or another. and....let me see your face.

KEITH:

No. I have no face.

JOHN:

I don't care. I love you. I don't care what you look like.

KEITH:

See you hun.

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BLACK OUT.

IN THE BLACKOUT A DRUM ROLL.

ANNOUNCEMENT;

Ladies, and Gentlemen, the moment you've been waiting for. You've heard the rumours, you've seen the posters, now lick your lips and wrap your taste buds round Greta Motevideo and the garter girls.

LIGHTS UP ON A RAUNCHY, TACKY, PRODUCTION NUMBER OF GERSHWIN'S FUNNY FACE, WITH KEITH/GRETA FLANKED BY DANCING GIRLS WHO ALL HAVE BANDAGED FACES.

I love your funny face,
Your sunny, funny face,
For you're a cutie with more then beauty,
You've got a lot of personality N. T.
A thousand laughs I've found.
In having you around.
Though you're no Greta Garbo,
For worlds I'd not replace,
Your sunny, funny face.

etc. etc.

THE NIGHTCLUB DISSOLVES AND WE SEE JOHN AND HELEN BEING LED TO A TABLE IN GIOVANI'S FOR THEIR ANNIVERSARY MEAL. THEY ARE BOTH TENSE.

THE INTRODUCTION TO PORTER'S "EVERY TIME WE SAY GOOD BYE" IS PLAYED AS SIMPLY AND CLEANLY AS POSSIBLE.

DURING THIS, THEY EACH TRY TO SPEAK BUT CAN NOT SEEM TO FIND WORDS TO EXPRESS HOW THEY FEEL.

GRETA SINGS VERY GENTLY:

Every time we say goodbye,
I die a little.
Every time we say goodbye,
I wonder why a little.
Why the gods above me,
who must be in the know,
Think so little of me,
They allow you to go.

When you're near there's such an air
Of spring about it.

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I can hear, a lark somewhere
Begin to sing about it.
There's no love song finer
But how strange
The change
From major to minor,
Every time, we say goodbye.

THE MUSIC CONTINUES.

BRENDAN AND HELEN SPEAK THEIR THOUGHTS AGAINST THE MUSIC.

BRENDAN:

And the white table cloth stretches for ever between you
Like ice that the little candle could never melt.

HELEN:

And you long to stretch across
But you are scared that there would be nothing there to touch.

BRENDAN:

And the cheap, musical comedy romance
Plays on and on in the background
As it once did when first you gazed into each other,

HELEN:

Drank each other in the soft light.

BRENDAN:

As it will play on and on
When you are not there and just a flicker of memory.

HELEN:

How strange the change,
How terrible to fall out of love.

BRENDAN:

How strange the change,
How inconceivable that what once was is fading fast.

HELEN:

And the tiny candle...

BRENDAN:

On a sea of white ice,

HELEN:

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Still flickers strong enough to pick out a tear shed at the words of the cheap musical comedy romance.

BRENDAN:

But someone let it burn too low

HELEN:

And soon it will go out for ever.

PERHAPS THEY DANCE GENTLY TO THE MUSIC.

SIMON GETS UP FROM THE WORD PROCESSOR.

SIMON:

Hey sonny, has Hardachre, read you any of this. It's bollocks. It's complete bollocks. He's finally cracked and there's nothing to stop me becoming the king of trash horror. A killer that's

attacking one in ninety people and everyone's so pre-occupied nobody cares. Where's the fun in that? Where's the group of spunky teenagers splitting up to search the creepy house, where's the witty serial killer taunting the overworked policemen about his next move.

THE DEMON STANDS BEHIND HIM WITH A CRUEL LOOKING KNIFE RAISED ABOVE HIS HEAD.

That's what people want. Not this bull shit. This wouldn't frighten anybody.

AS THE DEMON BRINGS DOWN THE KNIFE THE MUSIC AND LIGHTS BLACK OUT SUDDENLY.

IN THE DARKNESS THE DEMON MAKES THE SOUND OF JULIE CRYING, AND BRENDAN CALLS TO HELEN AS THE NEXT SCENE IS SET UP.

BRENDAN:

Helen!, Helen!

LIGHTS UP. HELEN ENTERS.

HELEN:

What is it?

BRENDAN ENTERS.

BRENDAN:

Can't you keep the baby quiet? I'm trying to work.

HELEN:

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Well, do you want to try telling her?

BRENDAN:

What's the matter with her?

HELEN:

There's nothing the matter with her. Babies cry.

BRENDAN:

Can't you do something about it? Pick her up... or feed her.. or, I don't know.

HELEN:

Well, why don't you try?

BRENDAN:

Because I am trying to write.

HELEN:

I'm trying to write too. I have deadlines to make with my reviews, don't you ever think of that? Why is it always me that has to look after her?

BRENDAN:

Because... you're the mother.

HELEN:

So? You're the father. What are you telling me? You're too macho to give your baby a cuddle?

BRENDAN:

I would love to have the time to do that.

HELEN:

Then make time.

BRENDAN:

I am writing a novel. It has to be good, you know that.

HELEN:

And the rest of us have to somehow fit in around it? God, we're arguing again. Whenever we speak these days it seems to end in an argument.

BRENDAN:

I'm not arguing.

HELEN:

You look exhausted. Why don't we both take a break? Caroline's sent over some new salad dressings she wants my opinion on for the restaurant. Why don't we have lunch

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together? You can tell me what you think.

BRENDAN:

You just don't understand do you? I can't screw up this time. Really, if you can't keep Julie under control I'm going to have to move to a hotel or something to get some quiet until this is finished.

HELEN:

But we never see each other as it is.

BRENDAN:

Do you think I want it to be that way? You've got slash to keep you company, help you with the baby.

HELEN:

Ever since you started this novel you've been too preoccupied to even look at me. It was never like this before. We used to talk through your ideas, now I'm lucky if you mutter a few words before you roll over and go to sleep. Then you're up as soon as it's light and you're locked away with your computer for the day.

BRENDAN:

Just until this is finished. Please believe me I'm nearly there.

HELEN:

But this has been going on for months. What kind of a marriage is this? We're becoming strangers.

BRENDAN:

That's not true.

HELEN:

It is Bren. think about it. When did we last spend time together? and what about Julie? I'm scared we're missing a really important part of her life. She spends more time with a lodger than she does with her father.

BRENDAN:

I look in on her all the time. she recognizes me. I can see she does.

HELEN:

Who as? Not someone who cares enough to be there for her.

BRENDAN:

That is a terrible thing to say. Of course I'm there for her. What do you think I'm doing all this for. It's for this family.

HELEN:

We are not a family. This is not a marriage, not the way things stand, can't you see

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that? And if you don't do something about it soon, it will be too late.

BRENDAN:
Meaning?

HELEN:
Meaning, I can not carry on like this for much longer.

BRENDAN:
And what, you'll leave me?

HELEN:
No... yes... I don't know but...

BRENDAN:
But what? listen to you, your talking like some stupid teenager. What do I have to do? Moon around you the whole time? Tell you I love you?

HELEN:
That would be nice.

BRENDAN:
OF COURSE I LOVE YOU! Grow up for god's sake! I'm your husband, that's your child upstairs.

HELEN:
Well, clearly that's not enough.

BRENDAN:
Well, clearly, if you want to be able to pay off the mortgage, there are times when it will have to be.

HE LEAVES.

THE DEMON CROSSES TOWARDS JULIE'S ROOM, CARRYING A SACK.

HELEN:
Oh Slash, have you eaten? I have some salad dressings you might like to try.

DEMON:
Feed Julie.

HELEN:
Well, yes if you like. Isn't it a little early?

BUT HE'S GONE.

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HELEN:

I suppose she has been restless. (CALLS UP TO HIM) I'll be in the kitchen if you change your mind.

BLACK OUT.

HELEN AND THE DEMON ARE WATCHING THE TV NEWS.

IT IS JOHN'S VOICE WE HEAR READING IT.

JOHN:

The latest crime figures released today continue to rise for the fifth year running. Almost every area of reported crime has gone up by at least 10%. Police are unable to offer any explanations but point to their success in enforcing parking restrictions as evidence that they are turning the corner. Amongst the more disturbing statistics is evidence that the number of missing persons reported last year has increased by an alarming 200%. Police say that these must remain low priority cases in the face of mounting traffic violations in the centre of London.

HELEN:

Turn the TV off Slash. I'm sick of always hearing bad news.

DEMON:

Slash.

TURNS IT OFF.

HELEN:

Why does nothing good ever happen in this city? How can anything positive grow when all we hear is bad news all the time? I think we should throw out the TV, you know Slash?

DEMON:

Slash.

HELEN:

I don't want Julie to grow up surrounded by all this negativity.

DEMON:

Slash.

THE DEMON PUTS ON A VIDEO. "HAPPY TALK" FROM SOUTH PACIFIC.

HELEN:

That's better. What is it about these songs? They're corny, of course they're corny but they just make you forget everything. All the shit. Brendan introduced me to them. When they were little, his brother, John used to play them all the time. He says they take him back to a time when you didn't have to worry about tax and mortgages and

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telephone bills and... and...

Maybe they can make you forget you have a husband who'd rather look at a word processor then spend time with you.

What do you see in these? You must have seen every one of them at least a dozen times. Are they where you escape to?

I'd like to read more. I think that would be a nice escape. When Julie's older I'm going to read her lots of stories.

DEMON:

Julie.

HELEN:

Slash, can you read? Slash?

DEMON:

Slash.

HELEN:

Lets turn this off for a moment.

THE DEMON ROARS.

HELEN:

Slash, I've told you not to make that noise. It's not considered polite in this country. We'll put the video back on in a minute. Look at this story book I bought for Julie. I know she's too young yet but I couldn't resist it. do you know what that word says?

THE DEMON HASN'T GOT A CLUE WHAT'S GOING ON.

HELEN:

It says House. - House.

DEMON:

(REPEATS) House.

HELEN:

You see, because this is a picture of a house. Little Red Ridding Hood's house.

DEMON:

House.

HELEN:

And what's this a picture of?

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THE DEMON JUST LOOKS BEWILDERED.

HELEN:

It's a little girl and so that's what these words say. Little girl. say little Girl.

THE DEMON:

Little Girl (IT POINTS TO THE PICTURE) Blood.

HELEN:

No that's not blood, that's her red cloak.
(TURNS THE PAGE) Now what's this?

DEMON:

Doggy!

HELEN:

No.

DEMON:

Big doggy!

HELEN:

It's a wolf. Look at this picture. Little Red Riding Hood is talking to the Wolf.

DEMON:

Why?

HELEN:

Why? because... I don't know why. Because she's walking through the wood and perhaps she's feeling a little bit lonely and he is all she has to talk to, this wolf.

She knows that she shouldn't really talk to wolves, that she should stay on the path and not wander from where she's supposed to be, but maybe she's been walking along the path too long, doing what's right, doing what she's supposed to do and for what? To be ignored? so she wanders off the path for a moment, just to see what happens and before you know it, there she is talking to a wolf.

He doesn't understand her, in fact he wants to eat her but maybe she thinks, well, at least he wants me for something. So she talks to him...

HELEN LOOKS AT THE DEMON.

...and slowly, much to her surprise, she begins to notice how handsome he is, that he's young and strong and she begins to feel something she'd forgotten trudging along the path every day and she thinks back to a time when she used to go out and get what she wanted.

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And she realizes, in the middle of this dark wood, that she is not about to be eaten by anyone or anything and that if anyone's going to be pigging out, it's going to be her!

PAUSE. SHE LOOKS AT THE DEMON LUSTFULLY.

Come with me. little Red Riding hoods going to teach you a whole lot of new words.

SHE LEADS THE DEMON UPSTAIRS.

WE HEAR JULIE ANDREW'S SING:

"LET'S START AT THE VERY BEGINNING, A VERY GOOD PLACE TO START. WHEN YOU READ YOU BEGIN WITH A,B,C, WHEN YOU SING YOU BEGIN WITH DO, RE, ME, THE FIRST THREE NOTES JUST HAPPEN TO BE, DO, RE, ME, FAR, SO, LA, TEE, DO"

JOHN ENTERS, HE IS READING FROM THE OPENING OF THE ORESTIA.

JOHN:

The long watch I keep... propped on my arms, crouched on the roofs of Atreus like a dog.

And when I keep to my bed, soaked in dew,
and the thoughts go groping through the night
and the good dreams that used to guard my sleep
not here, it's the old comrade terror, at my neck.

And I try to pick out tunes, I hum a little,
good cure for sleep, and the tears start,
I cry for the hard times come to the house,
No longer run like the great palace of old.

BLACK OUT ON JOHN.

LIGHTS UP ON JULIE'S COT. BLANKETS HANG DOWN AROUND IT. SOMEONE COULD HIDE BEHIND OR UNDERNEATH IT WITHOUT BEING SEEN.

A DOLL DRESSED AS LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD POKES ITS HEAD OVER THE TOP.

THE DEMON IS USING IT AS A PUPPET TO ENTERTAIN JULIE. HE TRIES, WITH LIMITED SUCCESS TO DO THE DIFFERENT VOICES.

LITTLE RED:

Hello Julie, hello! New words. "Little girl", say "Little girl" Hello Julie.

A PUPPET WOLF APPEARS.

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WOLF:
Hello Julie! Wolf.

LITTLE RED:
Big doggy.

WOLF:
(VERY ANGRY) NO, NO NO LITTLE GIRL. "WOLF"! NOT "BIG DOGGY"!

THE WOLF AND LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD FIGHT VIOLENTLY FOR A MOMENT
AND THEN SPRING APART, OUT OF BREATH.

LITTLE RED:
Riding Blood lonely.

WOLF:
Wolf lonely.

LITTLE RED:
Riding Blood teach new word. "Kiss"

RED RIDING HOOD KISSES THE WOLF

LITTLE RED:
Riding Blood happy.

WOLF:
Wolf... Frightened.

LITTLE RED:
Riding Blood teach "Snogging"

THE PUPPETS KISS PASSIONATELY.

LITTLE RED:
Riding Blood happy.

WOLF:
Wolf.... frightened.

LITTLE RED:
Riding Blood teach "Heavy petting"

THE PUPPETS KISS SOME MORE.

LITTLE RED:
Riding Blood happy.

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WOLF:
Wolf.... OK.

LITTLE RED:
Riding blood teach "Blow job"

THE PUPPETS OBLIGE.

LITTLE RED:
Riding Blood happy.

WOLF:
Wolf.... VERY HAPPY!

A NOISE FROM OFF. THE PUPPETS TURN TO FACE IT AND THEN LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

LITTLE RED:
Julie's daddy!

WOLF:
Sssh! Mustn't tell secret!

THE PUPPETS DUCK OUT OF SIGHT UNDER THE COT.

BRENDAN ENTERS. HE HAS A LARGE GLASS OF WHISKY. HE PULLS A CHAIR UP TO THE FAR SIDE OF THE COT, WHERE THE PUPPETS WERE AND LOOKS DOWN AT HIS DAUGHTER.

BRENDAN:
Hi! look at you. All smiles! What's that big smile for? For daddy? Smile for Daddy. Ahhhhh! Daddy's been working for Julie. Daddy's been writing a big book for Julie. A big book about a brave man who goes out and searches for a demon. So that Julie will have a big house to live in and lots of nice clothes and books and toys and things to eat. Would you like that Julie? So that Mummy and Daddy can be happy. And Mummy will stop bitching at Daddy and become like the lady in the book. She's a beautiful lady like Mummy used to be, when Mummy used to make herself look beautiful for Daddy, and she listens and she understands so that no one in the story has to feel...

to feel...

lonely.

DEMON:
(LOW WHISPER FROM UNDER THE COT) Lonely.

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BRENDAN:

What was that? Who's there?... Slash was that you?

DEMON:

Julie's daddy needs Wolf.

THE WOLF POPS UP IN FRONT OF BRENDAN.

BRENDAN:

Slash! What are you doing! Let go of my leg!

DEMON:

WOLF! BLOW JOB!

THE WOLF DUCKS OUT OF SIGHT.

LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE AS THE DEMON GIVES BRENDAN A BLOW JOB FROM UNDER THE COT. ALL WE CAN SEE OF THIS IS THE STUNNED EXPRESSION ON BRENDAN'S FACE.

OVER THE TOP OF THIS, JULIE ANDREWS SINGING "DO RE ME".

END OF SCENE.

THE DEMON BRINGS JULIE A PRESENT. HE UNWRAPS IT. IT IS A LITTLE TOY PIANO.

HE PLACES IT IN THE COT.

WE HEAR JULIE PLAY A SCALE WITH A GREAT FLOURISH.

SHE BEGINS TO PLAY A LITTLE MARCH BY MOZART.

FROM A SACK, THE DEMON TAKES A CARVING KNIFE AND SHARPENS IT IN TIME TO THE MUSIC.

JULIE IMPROVISES SOME JAZZ ON THE MOZART THEME. THE DEMON TAKES OUT POTS AND PANS AND SPOONS AND DRUMS ALONG. IT GETS QUITE WILD. THEY ARE HAVING A LOVELY TIME.

JOHN ENTERS AND READS FROM A RECIPE BOOK.

JOHN:

"A Pate is a paste of ground meat mixed with fat, seasonings and perhaps brandy or wine.

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First poach the fat in scalding water for about 4 minutes, then put the coarse blade of the meat grinder on and grind the fat through. Change the blade to medium and grind the shoulder and liver through. Put the fat and the meat together and mix in the spices and gelatin, add milk and eggs blend again. Bake at 350 F for about 2 hours, then place a half pound weight on top until cold.

A good, imaginative, home made pate of any kind is a rhapsodic thing to have on hand, for lunch, or snacks, or midnight dazzlement. I advise you to always make a lot at one time, because it keeps a whole month in the refrigerator and you can have it ready to provide instant joy."

BLACK OUT.

HELEN AND BRENDAN MEET MID STAGE.

HELEN:

Have you seen Slash?

BRENDAN:

I was just coming to ask you the same thing.

HELEN:

What do you want him for? you had him holed up in your study all yesterday afternoon.

BRENDAN:

I like to run some ideas by him for the novel, make sure it has international appeal.

HELEN:

AGAIN! He hardly speaks English how are you communicating Esperanto? I need him with me.

BRENDAN:

Give the guy a break you hardly let him out of your sight.

HELEN:

I'm teaching him things. He's got so much to learn.

BRENDAN:

I find him very knowledgeable.

HELEN:

Certainly there's a raw animal energy about him certain people could learn from. I'm giving him the refinements.

BRENDAN:

Well, I think your tiring him out. Some nights he looks exhausted.

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HELEN:

I haven't had any complaints. He's a very willing pupil.

BRENDAN:

He just doesn't want to hurt your feelings. I think you should lay off him.

HELEN:

Oh you think so! well, what about you? boring him to death up there in your study?

BRENDAN:

Please believe me, he is very far from being bored in my study. He exhausts me.

HELEN:

Well, that was never very difficult. Perhaps while your awake you could move the rest of your belongings out of my bedroom. I need the space.

BRENDAN:

What for?

HELEN:

Strenuous exercise. Maybe you should think about taking a little.

BRENDAN:

Believe me, I've been working out a lot recently.

HELEN:

Well, if you see Slash -

BRENDAN:

Helen, I want a divorce.

HELEN:

You can try it but don't think for a moment you'd get visiting rights.

BRENDAN:

I wouldn't need them. Obviously he'd stay with me.

HELEN:

In your dreams!

BLACK OUT. END OF SCENE.

COMPLETE MOOD CHANGE.

SHADOWS FALL ACROSS THE STAGE.

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TENSE MUSIC.

THE SOUND OF BREAKING GLASS FROM ANOTHER ROOM.

A YOUNG WOMAN ENTERS WITH A TORCH, THE SMELL AND THE FILTH AROUND HER OBVIOUSLY APPALS HER. SHE LOOKS VERY FRIGHTENED.

SHE OPENS A CUPBOARD DOOR, THERE IS NOTHING INSIDE.

SHE LOOKS INSIDE A DESK DRAW, BLOWS THE DUST FROM SOME BOOKS SHE FINDS THERE BUT THEY ARE NOT WHAT SHE IS LOOKING FOR.

SHE OPENS ANOTHER DOOR.

A BLAST OF MUSIC. SHE SCREAMS.

THE LIGHT FROM HER TORCH PICKS OUT KEITH'S HORRIBLY SCARRED FACE.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE SEEN HIS FACE.

HE HAS A POKER RAISED ABOVE HIS HEAD READY TO SMASH DOWN ON HER SCULL.

SHE STUMBLES BACKWARD AWAY FROM HIM.

HIS CLOTHES ARE TATTERED AND FILTHY.

KEITH:

Who are you? What do you want?

WOMAN:

I'm sorry I didn't know anyone lived here.

KEITH:

Nobody does. Nobody does. Alright? You haven't seen me. You don't tell anyone I'm here. Is that clear?

WOMAN:

Yes... yes... I won't tell anyone.

KEITH:

What do you want here?

WOMAN:

I tried to phone, many times.

KEITH:

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(HIS MOOD IS WORLD WEARY AND BITTERLY RESIGNED RATHER THEN ANGRY) That was you? I thought people had given up phoning here long ago, the letters and the visits, sobbing, hammering on the door in the middle of the night, wailing in the darkness. Finally they got the message.

THE WOMAN:

I came to see father John.

KEITH:

Of course you did! They all do. Why would anyone come to see me? A melted wax work.

WOMAN:

Is he here?

KEITH:

He's dead. The lucky bastard got out.

WOMAN:

NO! he was my last hope.

KEITH:

(BITTERLY) He was nothing of the kind. There is no hope.

WOMAN:

My husband.... he disappeared.

KEITH:

Husband, brother, boyfriend, best beloved only son. That cuts no ice in this house. Even the silence has a piece missing.

WOMAN:

I'll go then.

KEITH:

Why don't you.

WOMAN:

I'm sorry to have... It's just that someone told me he had answers.

KEITH:

He once did. Answers but no solutions.

WOMAN:

Do you know what happened to my husband? Please think. He was a good man, some people thought he was tiresome, I never did. He had such energy, you see. So much belief in himself. He worked for the bank, he advised people on their mortgages and on

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the subway he would weave fantastical horror stories in pencil on the back of their agreements. He would read them to me and I typed them up into three whole books. Now even those books are missing.

KEITH:

There are no more horror stories here. I closed the door on them long ago.

WOMAN:

If you know something you have to tell me.

KEITH:

Buy yourself some more books, the stores are full of them. They're better than what I have to tell. You can close the covers on them.

WOMAN:

I want to know!

KEITH:

No.

WOMAN:

What happened to my husband?

KEITH:

He died in an avalanche. He drowned in the electric blue waters of the Azores. A cloud sucked him up into the sky and he rained in a billion droplets of light, at midnight across a desert. Take your pick.

WOMAN:

I want the truth.

KEITH:

No you don't! What are you going to do with it? The truth.

WOMAN:

I... I don't know. I suppose it will bring me peace of mind.

KEITH:

No, no never. that is the last thing. This truth gnaws away at you, ask anyone it touches, it makes you burn with anger, it makes you want to shout and scream at the injustice of it all but worst of all it makes you want to change things and stop it.

WOMAN:

Yes, yes, that's what I want! I don't want anyone else to go through this loss. We were young we had a whole lifetime together ahead of us.

KEITH:

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You see? You're starting already! Do you think people want to hear crazy talk like that? It's ugly. They may print our stories in the newspapers, books even, perhaps actors will put on old clothes and pretend to be us for an hour or so. People will sit quietly in the darkness and wonder at it all but the lights will come up and it'll be easier to be cynical, it'll be easier to perform musicals. It'll be easier to turn the page and read about the sex lives of famous people, until the stories of the beautiful people will squeeze out the stories of us, the ugly people.

WOMAN:

Do you think what I'm feeling is ugly?

KEITH:

No no! not to me, but to the people you need to listen to you, your shouting out the truth will make your face as ugly as mine. No one looks too long into faces like ours. Did you ever listen to people like us?

WOMAN:

...I DON'T UNDERSTAND. This wasn't supposed to happen. We were a respectable ordinary couple. Things like this happen to weirdos, freaks, outsiders.

KEITH:

And that's why you didn't listen, let the politicians off the hook, wouldn't pay for investigations or demand any answers.

WOMAN:

I was unhappy in my job, our marriage was going through a rough patch, I didn't have time for... for... that sort of thing. DO YOU KNOW HOW DIFFICULT IT IS PAYING A MORTGAGE?

BLACKOUT.

LIGHTS UP ON HELEN, BRENDAN, AND THE DEMON SAT AT A DINNER TABLE. THEY ARE WEARING PAPER PARTY HATS, THERE ARE STREAMERS AROUND THEM. THERE IS A LARGE SILVER PLATTER IN FRONT OF THEM COVERED WITH A LID.

HELEN:

Slash, how wonderful of you to cook us this celebration dinner.

BRENDAN:

To think you've been with us two whole years.

HELEN:

What would we do with out you? You've brought music into our lives.

BRENDAN:

It's you that has saved our marriage. We stay together for you.

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HELEN:
We are nothing without you.

BRENDAN:
Don't ever leave us.

HELEN:
No, never leave us.

DEMON:
Julie.

BRENDAN:
Julie doesn't care for you as we do. Forget Julie.

HELEN:
Always spoiling our fun together with her incessant screaming and mess.

BRENDAN:
You spend too much time running around after her. We've been talking. We think we should just board up the door to the nursery.

THE DEMON LIFTS UP THE LID ON THE SILVER PLATTER IN FRONT OF THEM.

DEMON:
Julie.

HELEN:
Oh Slash, how clever you've made pate.

BRENDAN:
Is there nothing you can't do?

THE LIGHTS CHANGE. IN SLOW MOTION THEY EAT THE PATE.

OVER THE TOP OF THIS WE HEAR JOHN'S VOICE.

JOHN:
I pray my fears prove false and fall
and die and never come to birth!
Even exultant health, well we know,
exceeds its limits, comes so near disease
it can breach the wall between them.
 BUT if caution only casts the pick of the cargo,
the house will not go down, not outright;
labouring under it's wealth of grief

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the ship of state rides on.

The good dreams that used to guard my sleep
are not here, it's the old comrade, terror, at my neck.

And I try to pick out tunes, I hum a little,
A good cure for sleep, and the tears start...

JULIE ANDREWS SINGS:

"WHEN THE DOG BITES, WHEN THE BEE STINGS, WHEN I'M FEELING SAD, I
SIMPLY REMEMBER MY FAVOURITE THINGS AND THEN I DON'T FEEL SO SAD."

THE END.

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Inserts.

INSERT between page 27 & 28.

BRENDAN ON THE TELEPHONE TO A MAN IN A CALL BOX.

MAN:

Hello I'm phoning about the room. Is it still available?

BRENDAN:

Oh yes, yes, absolutely. When would you like to move in?

MAN:

Hold on a minute. I'll need to take a look at it first.

BRENDAN:

Yes, yes ofcourse. when would be convenient? How about... say... well, when could
you get here?

MAN:

I've got a lot of other rooms to see. I could make you number eight on my list if you like.

BRENDAN:

Eight! Well, yes but couldn't you pop round here first? I mean... I'm sure you'll like it. The
lovely, warm friendly, family atmosphere. The...

MAN:

I dare say Mr...

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BRENDAN:
Hardachre. Brendan. Bren.

MAN:
Mr Hardaachre. Everyone I've phoned has been more than eloquent about the charms of their particular dwelling. Trouble with the mortgage is it?

BRENDAN:
Not... really.

MAN:
Well, I should get to you about six thirty. I prefer filter coffee.

BRENDAN:
What? Oh I see, yes. I'm sure we could manage that.

MAN:
What was the address?

BRENDAN:
328 Porchester Gardens.

MAN:
I'm running out of space for all these addresses. Hang on I'll write it on my hand.

HE DOES.

I'm in the docklands now. Starting with a very smart sounding warehouse apartment. Have you been down here Mr Hardachre? amazing atmosphere to the place. The designer's have really cultivated the derelict look on the outside. I did wonder if I'd come to the wrong place but I expect it highlights the luxury inside don't you.

BRENDAN:
Well.. possibly. What was your name?

MAN:
Flash. Mr Flash. So I might see you later. Goodbye.

BRENDAN LOOKS STRESSED.

CROSS TO THE MAN KNOCKING ON THE DOOR OF THE DERELICT LOOKING WARE HOUSE.

NO ANSWER.

HE KNOCKS AGAIN.

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NO ANSWER.

MAN:
Hello! Anyone at home?

THE DEMON ANSWERS THE DOOR.

MAN:
Ah, good afternoon. My name's Mr Flash. we spoke on the phone earlier. My I come in?

AS HE GOES IN-

I prefer Filer Coffee.

THE DEMON FOLLOWS HIM IN CLOSING THE DOOR BEHIND THEM.

A PAUSE.

THE SOUND OF THUDDING.

THE DEMON EMERGES AGAIN CARRYING THE MAN'S SEVERED HAND. HE LOOKS QUIZICALLY AT THE ADDRESS WRITTEN ON IT.

BLACKOUT ON THIS.

BACK TO BRENDAN AND HELENS HOUSE.

Insert 2

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Not that one eh? Well, thank you, I'm sure she'll enjoy these.

HELEN:

I'll have another try at feeding her.

BRENDAN:

She's still not taking anything?

HELEN:

She just isn't interested.

BRENDAN:

Everything will be alright now, I promise. I'll get Slash's room ready.

HE GOES OUT.

HELEN:

Welcome, Slash. If you want anything, you just let us know. We want you to be happy.

DEMON:

Slash. Julie!

HELEN:

I think she's smiling at you.

DEMON:

(GENTLY) Slash.

LIGHTS FADE ON THEM.

KEITH, HIS FACE BANDAGED UP, PURSUED BY THE GHOST OF JOHN. KEITH CAN NOT HEAR OR SEE JOHN. OR IF HE CAN, HE IS IGNORING HIM.

JOHN:

Keith, Keith! Listen to me please! Don't you see what's happened? The Demon has actually moved into my brothers house. It's there. a maggot at the heart of the apple. Do something. How can you turn away? Go to him, arm yourself with the power of God's love and drive it away. I never could, I could never identify it but you have met it face to face and survived. Are you listening to me? Can you hear me? Keith, listen to me! Keith! Keith!

THEY EXIT.

BLACK OUT.

THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.

JULIE AND THE DEMON SAT IN FRONT OF THE TV. WATCHING THE VIDEO ON FRENCH FOOD COOKERY. THE LIGHT PLAYS ACROSS THEIR FACES.

THE VIDEO COMMENTARY:

Although widely condemned by animal welfare organization the preparation of Pate de fois gras still continues in rural areas of France. The process involves the taking of a young goose, and force feeding it a rarefied diet until its liver becomes inflamed, this is then made into a pate regarded as a delicacy for it's richness and succulence.

THE DEMON:

(REPEATS) Succulence.

HE LOOKS ACROSS AT THE BABY. THERE IS AN EVIL LOOK IN IT'S EYE.

(SLOWLY, WITH RELISH) Julie!

BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO.

THUNDEROUS GOTHIC ORGAN MUSIC SUBSIDES AND LIGHTS COME UP ON OCTAVIA, A FIFTEEN YEAR OLD SCHOOL GIRL, DOING A BRASS RUBBING IN KEITH'S CHURCH.

THE FLOOR OF THE CHURCH IS COVERED IN SMASHED OBJECTS AS IF A HURRICANE HAS SWEEPED THROUGH IT.

IT'S THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. SHE IS LISTENING TO A WALKMAN. AS THE MUSIC SUBSIDES WE HEAR HER SINGING TUNELESSLY ALONG TO TAKE THAT'S "IT ONLY TAKES A MINUTE GIRL".

KEITH APPEARS IN THE DOORWAY BUT DOES NOT STEP INTO THE LIGHT SO WE CAN NOT SEE HIS FACE. HE HAS TO SHOUT TO GET HER ATTENTION.

KEITH:
EXCUSE ME! EXCUSE ME!

SHE TAKES OFF THE HEADPHONES.

What are you doing here? How did you get in?

OCTAVIA:
Oh, 'right mate!

KEITH:
No I am not all right. How did you get in?

OCTAVIA:
Through the sky light at the back. It was very difficult. But I didn't want to interrupt you in case you was busy.

KEITH:
You didn't want to interrupt because you knew no one is allowed in here any more. the church is closed. Didn't you see the signs.

OCTAVIA:
It was a bit dark.

KEITH:
It's the middle of the night. Aren't you frightened?

OCTAVIA:
I was a bit but I put my Take That tape on. And I was alright. This was the only time I could come. See, I've got this job doing the shelves at Kwik Save after school and I've got to do more and more hours since my dad lost his job. It's a brass rubbing.

KEITH:

Yes I can see that.

OCTAVIA:

It's for a competition right, it was on Blue Peter. You have to send in a brass rubbing and the best gets to meet Take That. Well, you get some crappy book as well but **they** give it to you and that's the main thing. The times nearly up, though. Robbie's my favourite. Do you want to see a picture?

SHE MOVES TOWARD KEITH IN THE SHADOWS.

KEITH:

No, keep away from me!

OCTAVIA:

Why, are you hiding or something? Let me see your face.

KEITH:

No. I don't want you to.

OCTAVIA:

Why?

KEITH:

...I was in an accident, I was attacked. My face is destroyed.

OCTAVIA:

Kickin!, gis a look.

KEITH:

Get out of here.

OCTAVIA:

You can't make me. This place doesn't belong to you.

KEITH:

I am the custodian of God's House.

OCTAVIA:

So? God would want me to meet Robbie out of Take That. I know he would. I've done this knight do you think he'll like it, Robbie? I know they probably won't pick them there selves but he's bound to see it. He'll see I'm special and ask me to be his girlfriend. I suppose you like Mark best, most people do.

KEITH:

I don't know what you're talking about. Now go before I call the police.

OCTAVIA:

Then loads of people will see your face. who broke all these things.

KEITH:

People like you.

OCTAVIA:

I didn't do it. What would I want to go and do that for I'm doing my rubbing. You have to show some one from back in history, from your community because we're all members of communities. It's best to do a brass rubbing but if you're a poor kid who lives in a high rise you can do rubbings of leaves and gratings and things from the flats because they're a community too. Load of crap if you ask me but I want to get into that Robbie's knickers.

KEITH:

Listen Valerie Singleton. I don't want you here.

OCTAVIA:

But I'm not doing any harm.

KEITH:

No? Look at this place. Ever since... Ever since.. I've been here on my own, each day Kid's like you break in and smash things. Look at it now.

OCTAVIA:

Would you like me to clear up for you.

KEITH:

No!

BUT SHE DOES.

OCTAVIA:

I don't mind about your face you know. I wouldn't puke up or anything. My names Tave. That's short for Octavia, our dad saw it in a book. It's not kids, you know, that do all this. How can it be? It was really difficult getting in here. Have any of the locks been bust?

KEITH:

Well, some one is getting in, somehow.

OCTAVIA:

Nah, I reckon it's a poltergeist.

KEITH:

What!

OCTAVIA:

A poltergeist. That's what they call a spirit who can't rest in peace because it's got

unfinished business. So it chucks stuff about so you take notice of it.

KEITH:
What nonsense.

OCTAVIA:
No it's not. That was on Blue Peter once and all.

KEITH:
For goodness sake! can't they stick to guide dogs and sticky back plastic.

OCTAVIA:
We're particularly sensitive to them. Us adolescents. I could probably talk to it if you wanted.

KEITH:
This is a church, a holy place. It is not going to be haunted.

OCTAVIA:
It doesn't have to be an evil spirit. it could be friendly. it could just be trying to remind you about something.

KEITH:
That's enough! I don't want to listen to any more of this nonsense, do you understand? There is nothing I need to be reminded of, nothing. You're talking nonsense and I don't want you to breath a word of this to any more do you understand? poltergeists! What utter drivell.

OCTAVIA:
Keep your hair on.

KEITH:
This is vandals, purely and simply mindless kids who haven't anything better or do with there time. Soon they'll get sick of it. Soon they'll go away and leave me alone. that's all I want, to be left alone. Now please go. Get out of here.

OCTAVIA:
But I've got to win this competition.

KEITH:
It's dangerous here. There are things going on which you don't understand. Run away now. while you still can.

OCTAVIA:
I've got to meet him, Robbie. All my mates, they've got boyfriends. Sally, her and Clive Twining are going steady, nearly a month now. Plenty of them have gone all the way. I haven't even had a proper song, well, my cousin Royce last christmas, though that doesn't really count even though I did pretend he was my boy friend for a while, but he's

30 and big folds of his bum hang over his jeans and Aunty Tracey says he's a bit of a spaz anyway. Boys don't like me, you see. They say I'm weird. I'm not weird it's just that I'm interested in things. I like to ask questions and find things out. Robbie's the same. He was always getting into trouble at school for being cheeky. We could find out things together. I wouldn't be too clingy or anything. I know it's a big responsibility for him being a teen heart throb, lots of people taking up his time but I could be there for him, quietly in the background, when he was tired at night and he just wanted to curl up in the darkness and I could smooth his hair and he could kiss me gently on my eyes, like I saw a bloke do in a film once, and I wouldn't ever have to lie in bed and listen to mum and dad fighting on and on and watch the car headlights going past my bedroom window, flooding the corners with piss yellow light. I've written all these things to him in my letters, on Garfield note paper, which I know would make him laugh but they don't pass my letters on to him. they just send back the same stupid photo and want a cheque for £6.95 to join the fan club. But you can sent a postal order if you like. I have to meet him face to face and tell him.

KEITH:

Do you think he'd come near you if you looked like this!

HE UNCOVERS HIS FACE. HIS BACK TOWARDS US SO WE CAN NOT SEE. SHE GASPS.

A CLAP OF THUNDER. THE GHOST OF JOHN APPEARS.

OCTAVIA:

He's here. The Poltergeist, look!

KEITH:

Listen to me! There is nothing there, nothing, Do you understand.

HE STUMBLES OUT.

JOHN AND OCTAVIA LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

JOHN:

There is no time to loose. something terrible is happening. Are you prepared to listen to what I have to tell you?

BLACK OUT.

THE DEMON ENTERS, SELECTS A VIDEO AND PUTS IT ON.

IT PLAYS "GETTING TO KNOW YOU" FROM "THE KING AND I"

HELEN ENTERS.

HELEN:

Slash?

DEMON:
Slash!

HELEN:
Are you sure you don't mind baby sitting Julie tonight?

DEMON:

INSERT

33-93

Insert 3

BRENDAN:

To think you've been with us two whole years.

HELEN:

What would we do without you? You've brought music into our lives.

BRENDAN:

It's you that has saved our marriage. We stay together for you.

HELEN:

We are nothing without you.

BRENDAN:

Don't ever leave us.

HELEN:

No, never leave us.

DEMON:

Julie.

BRENDAN:

Julie doesn't care for you as we do. Forget Julie.

HELEN:

Always spoiling our fun together with her incessant screaming and mess.

BRENDAN:

You spend too much time running around after her. We've been talking. We think we should just board up the door to the nursery.

THE DEMON LIFTS UP THE LID ON THE SILVER PLATTER IN FRONT OF THEM.

DEMON:

Julie.

HELEN:

Oh Slash, how clever you've made pate.

BRENDAN:

Is there nothing you can't do?

THE LIGHTS CHANGE. IN SLOW MOTION THEY EAT THE PATE.

OCTAVIA BURSTS IN DRESSED LIKE A GHOST BUSTER.

HELEN AND BRENDAN'S ACTIONS FREEZE.

OCTAVIA:

STOP! This can't happen. I won't let it happen! (TO THE DEMON) I've come to fight you.

THE DEMON LEAPS ON TO THE TABLE. ROARING, IT GRABS A KNIFE.

OCTAVIA:

Why have you done all this?

DEMON:

(TRIUMPHANTLY) SLASH!

OCTAVIA:

I'm not frightened of you.

DEMON:

Slash!

OCTAVIA:

No, that's not your real name? Why don't you tell me who you are? Where do you come from?

DEMON:

Slash!

OCTAVIA:

What do you want!

THE DEMON DOES A MANIC DANCE ON THE TABLE. IT SMILES AT OCTAVIA ENGAGINGLY.

DEMON:

Dance with me.

OCTAVIA:

What do you want? Who sent you here?

DEMON:

Want? who? slash!

OCTAVIA:

Do you understand. I want you to tell me why you're here?

DEMON:

(REPEATS BEMUSED) Why?

OCTAVIA:
Why?

DEMON:
Why?

OCTAVIA:
Why?

DEMON:
(IT'S VERY CONFUSED) Why?

OCTAVIA:
Why?

THE DEMON ROARS IN ENRAGED CONFUSION.

OCTAVIA:
Why?

DEMON:
I... Slash. WHY!?!

THUNDER, LIGHTENING, SCARY MUSIC, SMOKE, LIGHTS, HOODED FIGURES
INVADE THE STAGE. THEY FORM A GUARD OF HONOUR.

EVERY ONE TURNS TO THE DOOR. LIGHT STREAMS IN THROUGH THE SMOKE.
THE HOODED FIGURES RAISE UP THEIR HANDS TOWARD THE DOOR.

THE MUSIC STOPS.

COMPLETE SILENCE.

PAUSE.

"DEATH" ENTERS.

HE IS WEARING BERMUDA SHORTS, SUNGLASSES, AND CARRYING AN
ELABORATE COCKTAIL. WHEN HE SPEAKS HE IS WORLD WEARY BUT
CHARMING.

DEATH:
What appears to be the trouble here?

THE DEMON IS HAVING A TANTRUM LIKE A SMALL CHILD.

DEMON:

Why, why, why, why!

DEATH:

Ape! Quiet please. Sit!

THE DEMON SITS OBEDIENTLY.

DEATH:

What's going on?

OCTAVIA:

Who are you?

DEATH:

I am Death. Sorry, that sounds awfully gothic I know. we've tried to find a more nineties buzz word. But so far, No Coco. Do you mind if I sit down?

THE HOODED FIGURES BRING A CHAIR AND THEN LEAVE.

and you are?

OCTAVIA:

Tave.

DEATH:

What an unusual name are your parents Slavic by any chance?

OCTAVIA:

(SUDDENLY FRIGHTENED) I.. I...

DEATH:

Please don't be frightened. there really isn't a great deal of point. What are you listening to on your walkman?

OCTAVIA:

Take That.

DEATH:

Isn't that those awfully nice young men that never quite make it to number one? I like the little cute one best. Jason is it?

OCTAVIA:

Mark.

DEATH:

Quite so. well much as I'd like to sit here chatting away to you um...

OCTAVIA:

Tave

DEATH:

Tave. I am rather anxious to get back to my holiday.

OCTAVIA:

Holiday?

DEATH:

Well, I suppose officially it's a sabbatical but it's much the same thing. A chance to catch up on all those novels you always meant to read but never quite got round to. Have you read any Mary Wesley? I think she's awfully good.

OCTAVIA:

How can you go on Holiday. Your Death?

DEATH:

Well, believe me it was a sticky one. But needs must where the Devil drives, if you'll excuse the pun. Over the centuries I tried all sorts of things, conflict was very big of course, I've started literally thousand of wars. Thought I could just leave you all to it, slip quietly away, and get myself a sun tan but you turn your back on these things for a moment and some buggers resolved them. So I came up with all kinds of killer plagues and diseases but there's always some little smart arse like you that says "hold on a minute, if we put this and that in a test tube, bung it on the old bunsen burner and give it a good shake we'll be well on the way to sorting it all out and in the meantime why don't you do this, this and this to prevent yourself getting it in the first place" Pisses me right off all that, all those smug people with their placards and their benefit nights and their registered charity collecting tins. Then one day it occurred to me I was thinking on too big a scale. What I needed to do was invent something that simply destabilized the people like you, that ask questions, and get things sorted out and I realised the answer already existed, I just needed to give it a boost. And voila! We have Ape here!

SLASH COMES FORWARD.

The most destructive force mankind has ever known and he's really taking hold.

OCTAVIA:

Ape?

DEATH:

Oh that's not his real name of course. Can you guess what it is? I'll give you a clue it begins with "A".

OCTAVIA:

Aids.

DEATH:

Aids shmaidz. Don't be stupid. Bit of public opinion releasing government cash, you could have the whole thing cracked within a decade. But you're not going to, you see, that's the point, because of Ape. Ape makes all that impossible. The world is full of strong intelligent people and they really care about finding cures and solutions but you try and get them to even pick up a pen in protest and you'll see how successful my scheme has been. Ape here's real name is "Apathy". I have a dream for every house hold - a mortgage, an ape and a ticket for Sunset Boulevard.

HE NOTICES BRENDAN AND HELEN.

What are they eating?

OCTAVIA:

Their baby.

DEATH:

Oh dear. That's not very nice is it? If only this were a Simon Gray play, how much more tastefully the whole thing could have been done. You'd probably be Felicity Kenndle. This is so crude.

OCTAVIA:

Exactly. People aren't really going to let a Demon into their houses.

DEATH:

Oh come on. In real life it's a lot more subtle than this. It's everywhere, it's endemic, a few people have escaped but who knows, in a few years you could be helping me yourself.

OCTAVIA:

No. Never. I won't let myself get caught.

DEATH:

Darling. You're fifteen years old. Please don't tell me you'll blossom into womanhood with your bedroom walls covered in Take That posters. You'll forget about everything, of course you will and grow as useless as yesterday's teen heart throb.

OCTAVIA:

People still play The Beatles, Elvis, all that classical stuff.

DEATH:

My dear, that was another time. The world has moved on. I have become cleverer. Think about it. Do you know anyone that still listens to Bros?

OCTAVIA:

Are you going to kill me?

SUCCULENCE Insert.

53-100

DEATH:

I was but I don't think I'll bother now. Have fun!

HE LEAVES. SHE FOLLOWS HIM TO THE DOORWAY AND LOOKS OUT AFTER HIM.

BRENDAN AND HELEN COME TO LIFE AND CARRY ON EATING AS THE LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE TO THE SOUND OF JULIE ANDREWS:

When the dog bites, When the bee stings, When I'm feeling sad, I simply remember my favourite things, and then I don't feel so bad.

THE END.