

The Witching Hour

Screenplay by ANNE RICE

FADE IN:

EXT. A SCOTTISH MOOR - NIGHT - 1670 A.D.

Far off, a massive stone castle looms. Trees silhouetted against the horizon against the star-dotted, green-purple sky. The branches of one tree seem to reach for the stars...

TRACKING IN - the 'tree' is A HOODED FIGURE: SUZANNE - 20, golden hair spilling from her hood, dazzling green eyes. Nestled in the folds of her cloak is DEBORAH - 5, scarlet curls, green eyes glowing. She peeks up at the bizarre sky.

DEBORAH (a thick Scottish accent)  
Mum - I'm so scared. Look at the color...

SUZANNE (a thick Scottish accent)  
(entranced. soothing)  
Deborah, be still. And listen...  
(a beat. in a chant...)  
Wind, you are a thousand eyes - but never seen.  
A thousand caresses - but never touched. A  
thousand voices - but never a word. Always with me,  
never .....

DEBORAH  
(fearful)  
Mum... Oh Mum, God will surely strike us -

SUZANNE  
Wind - I love you with that which is endless  
within me. Bring me your eyes - your touch -  
your voice...

A WIND gathers force, The grass sways. Leaves twirl.

SUZANNE  
Send me your soul. Come to me NOW!

The ferocious WIND HOWLS. Trees bend. The sky darkens.. SUZANNE'S hood is whipped off her head. A dagger of LIGHTNING cuts the sky open. Then - a sound, like a HOWL of birth.

A VOICE  
(melodic. wondrous)  
Suzanne, the door is open! Call me! Bring  
me to you with a name!

SUZANNE

(ecstatic. shouting above the ROAR)  
For the wind that lashes the trees that brings  
you to your lover... You are --- Lasher. LASHER!!

THUNDER rocks her to the ground. Rain pours down.

VOICE

I am through, my love! I have come!  
(a beat. joyful)  
Lasher..

SUZANNE thrusts her arms out as if to embrace the wind. DEBORAH peeks out from her mother's cloak. She looks at the ground - wide-eyed - and reaches out.

ECU - DEBORAH'S CLENCHED FIST

The tiny fist opens - a NUGE EMERALD glistens in her palm.

FADE TO BLACK FADE UP TO

DAY. ECU - THE CURVED RUNNER OF A ROCKING CHAIR

Rocking on a wooden floor. A large horned beetle skitters INTO FRAME - antenna flicking. Above it, the chair's runner reaches its highest point - descends --- and just misses it.

WOMAN'S VOICE (OC)

(a southern accent. cool)  
Do you see the lillies, Deedee...? Big as soup ladles.

TILT UP to a pale hand on the chair-arm. inside a faded pink sleeve - and UP to

ECU - A FACE, SKOCKING IN ITS MELANCHOLY VISAGE

A WOMAN - 50, a gaunt, shattered beauty. Not a flicker in her green eyes. Her hair is stringy - in need of a wash.

ANGLE - THE PORCH OF A LARGE GOTHIC MANSION

CARLOTTA MAYFAIR - 80, cane in hand, rocks DIEDRE MAYFAIR on the porch. Her white hair is pulled back severely. Skin tight on her skull. Green eyes keen and focused.

The house was magnificent - once: Tall columns. Stained glass. But it is a dying house. Rotted wood. Peeling paint. You can almost hear it wheeze...

ANGLE - THE GADEN BEYOND THE PORCH

Thick. Lush. Huge flowers flourish. A flagstone walk leads to a swimming pool filled with brackish water and lily pads. A wrought-iron fence encircles the grounds. on the other side, the street seems like another world.

BACK TO CARLOTTA AND DIEDRE ON THE PORCH CARLOTTA takes a syringe from a bag and injects  
DIEDRE, who shows no reaction. CARLOTTA feels her pulse...

CARLOTTA

We numb the body and the mind...but we haven't found a needle yst that can prick your soul. That belongs to him,  
doesn't it, my beautitul Deedee...?

A BREEZE suddenly rises. The trees and long grass stir. CARLOTTA smiles privately - and surveys the garden. Something there, for a moment, behind the waving branches...?

BEYOND THE WROT-IRON FENCE

A MAN - 60, white suit, fedora and an ivory walking stick - comes down the sidewalk. He tips his hat to the women, and walks on. CARLOTTA watches him go.

CARLOTTA

(dry. caustic)

Well, well, Deedee. Both your admirers have paid a call.

CARLOTTA looks down at the huge beetle -- and crushes it with her shoe. The BREEZE dies. The trees come to rest. But DIEDRE'S hair still flutters, as if stroked by a loving hand.

INT. ECU - A PAIR OF HANDS REST ATOP AN IVORY WALKING STICK

The stick's top is carved into a pair of angel's wings. The left hand wears an ivory ring - with a gold T set in it.

MAN'S VOICE (OC)

(an English accent. calm. sonorous)

Diedre was silent - still - as always....

TILT UP to AARON LIGHTNER (the white-suited Man who strolled past the Mayfair mansion).

AARON

..but there is no question about it she is dying.

WIDE OF SCENE - A MAGNIFICENT SITTING ROOM

AARON stands at a mahogany table, where a dozen MEN and Women - ages 25 to 60, elegantly dressed - sit and exchange sober looks at his pronouncement. They all wear the same ring.

AARON

(taps his chest lightly)

Her vibrations were unmistakable. I felt them quite clearly.

(sighs)  
Strange to think after thirty years...I shall walk by  
the porch  
and find the chair empty.

WOMAN AT THE TABLE  
What of the child, Aaron...?

AARON  
The child's life will take its inevitable turn.  
(pause) we  
will watch and wait... and soon - our waiting will be  
over

INT. CLOSE-UP - A PAIR OF WHITE DOORS  
In bold letters EMEAGENCY ONLY - KEEP CLEAR  
The doors fly open - PARAMEDICS barrel through, pushing a gurney with a  
bleeding WOMAN. We  
TRACK behind it A WOMAN suddenly races INTO FRAME, into the gurney's path.  
The gurney veers off  
- but we follow the WOMAN.

ROWAN MAYFAIR  
- 30, surgical garb and gloves, golden hair. piercing green eyes, stunning,  
focused. She  
enters:

AN EMERGENCY ROOM  
where two NURSES and a young DOCTOR flank a gurney that holds a BOY - 7,  
unconscious. ROWAN is  
pure, efficient motion - in command. As she nears the Boy -

ROWAN  
Let's have it. Fast.

DOCTOR  
Parents say he - uh - fell -

ROWAN  
Anybody got a BP yet...?

NURSE # 1  
Seventy over ninety.

ROWAN  
Pupils...?

NURSE # 1  
Unequal.

DOCTOR  
- and he seemed okay. Just banged his -

ROWAN  
FAST.

DOCTOR

(a bit rattled)  
uh - then he - be just -

ROWAN  
(hovering over the boy. Stating a fact)  
He just went out like a light-

The DOCTOR nods meekly- ROWAN raises the BOY'S eyelids.

ROWAN  
Massive subdural hematoma. We have to evacuate it -  
right now.

DOCTOR  
I'll tell OR we're bringing -

ROWAN  
He's herniating! Forget OR. He's dead before he's off  
the elevator  
Get me a trephine tray -  
(Nurses shift into motion)  
Anesthesia - stat! We need him intubated and blow  
down!

An anesthesia mask goes on the BOY. His head is shaved and iodined. A NURSE  
sets a tray.  
beside ROWAN. she picks up a small drill. All eyes settle on her. She starts  
to drill a hole  
in the BOY'S skull. Deeper. Deeper. And suddenly - blood spurts...

ROWAN  
Get me a bolt...

A small pressure gauge is handed to her. She screws it into the BOY'S skull.  
Takes a reading.

ROWAN  
Dress it. Get him to ICU...

As action goes on all around her, she steps back - and seems to take a breath  
for the first time  
since she entered.

ROWAN  
(softly. to no one in particular)  
He'll be okay...

INT. A HOSPITAL SCRUB ROOM. MINUTES LATER

ROWAN washes at a sink. She looks up to her reflection in the mirror. A  
strange look - hard  
to decipher. NURSE # 1 enters, untying her bloody smock. She grins.

NURSE # 1  
So, doctor - what do you see..  
(Rowan' gives her a crooked grin)

hole. I see somebody spending nineteen hours a day in this

(pause)

This isn't even your shift is it...?

ROWAN

(drying her hands. deadpan)

If 'd been home, I would've missed out on using the drill.

NURSE # 1

Take up woodworking.

ROWAN flashes a wry grin.

NURSE

(warm - but serious)

You just can't bear to lose one - can you...? you just won't let them die.

ROWAN'

(stares. smiles warmly)

No - I guess I won't.

INT. POV' - THROUGH AN UNFINISHED WINDOW FRAME. NIGHT

A view of the San Francisco skyline. FALL BACK to REVEAL

MICHAEL CURRY

- 40, denim shirt baggy corduroys, melancholy wisp of a smile. Gettle eyes staring into the night. A drag on his cigarette. And he rubs the cleft of his chin with the tip of his thumb - a life-long unconscious habit.

He is in the top floor of a renovation. The room is almost finished, carved moldings, high-angled ceiling, random-pegged floors and huge windows. A stunning work of design.

MAN'S VOICE

Right on schedule, Mikey. Finished -

MICHAEL

(an intentionally overdone Tony Bennett)

'I left my heart --- in Ran Sanfriscio...'

MAN'S VOICE (OC)

(louder)

- in three weeks, tops, like it or not.

MICHAEL

(grins. louder - without turning)

'And the light's always onnnnn in Massachuaetts...'

WIDE OF SCENE

STU - 35, overalls, short, squat, dusty - stands at a table draped with blueprints - beer in hand. grinning.

STU  
Ve-ry funny. But lilk. it or not -

MICHAEL  
(hollering now)  
'There is - a house - in New Orleans -

STU'S grin widens. He gives up and joins in:

MICHAEL AND STU  
(screaming)  
'THEY CALLLLLLLLLLL THE RISING SUN....!'

They break up in laughter, out of breath. STU joins MICHAEL at the window. they stare out at the city.

STU  
sooner Or later you're gonna run out of things to  
change. You  
always do.

MICHAEL  
(shrugs. looks round the room)  
I just - hate it when they're - finished.

STU searches MICHAEL'S fact. His grin slowly dissolves.

STU  
well - Donna made dinner tonight. so I gotta go.  
(pause)  
Wanna come..?  
(MICHAEL shakes his head NO)  
Gotta date...?  
(MICHAEL shakes his head NO)  
Ever gonna have another date...?

MICHAEL eyes him with an affectionate scowl. This is old territory. STU shrugs and gives up.

STU  
See ya Monday then.

STU winks - and leaves. MICHAEL turns back to the skyline - staring - and sighs. His thumb rubbing his cleft.

EXT. THE PACIFIC OCEAN. DAY

A sailboat drifts lazily on the flat water - its sails limp in the windless sky. San Francisco looms in the BG.

ANGEL - ON THE SAILBOAT'S DECK

ROWAN - in sweater and shorts - looks at the sky, searching for wind, and frowns. She strips down to a bikini, stretches out on the deck and points her face to the sun...

EXT. THE SAN FRANCISCO COAST - A JETTY. LATER THAT DAY

MICHAEL sits out on the rocks, sketching a house on a pad. the WIND picks up, the surrounding waters turn choppy. He draws his collar up. A seagull lands near him. MICHAEL starts sketching the gull.

MICHAEL

'The soaring larks lift up aloft with them the sky that  
to our  
shoulders was heavy. (grins) YOU like Rilke...?

The bird starts preening. A wave smacks against the rocks spraying MICHAEL. He looks around at the sea and frowns. The WIND tugs at him. Another wave sprays him. He rises.

MICHAEL

Dame weatherman said -

The gull SCREECHES - and suddenly takes off - coming right at him. MICHAEL ducks out of the way, slips on the slippery surface - and falls. His head strikes the rocks. A wave pounds the jetty and sweeps him into the sea.

MICHAEL

falling in the water. Losing consciousness. Being swept out to sea. His eyes closing. he's going under - Sinking..

BENEATH THE SEA

MICHAEL floats downward. A stream of bubbles squirts from his mouth then they stop. MOVE IN to his peaceful face. IN TIGHTER - into his closed eyes - and through them...

POV - SPEEDING THROUGH A BLACK NIGHT SKY WITH A ZILLION STARS

A fierce ROARING. Hair-pin turns around stars - the cosmic Daytona 500. Racing toward a huge, white-hot star... SMASHING through into - SILENCE. Freefalling through the richest, thickest GREEN imaginable.

Then, seeping out off the GREEN, PHANTOMS - shapeless - but the GREENESS is giving them form: SUZANNE with the emerald round her neck - and DEBORAH - a woman now, with the scarlet curls - and OTHERS - drifting, saturated, gleaming. Whispering, entreating:

SUZANNE

Go back, MICHAEL... Go Back

DEBORAH

The door, Michael. find the key...

SUZANNE

Help us. Do what you can.

ANGLE - MIHAEL. MOTIONLESS IN THE GREEN

suspended above a vast BLACKNESS. phantoms all around him. And MICAEL starts floating down toward it...

SUZANNE

Michael - NO! Go Back

EXT. ROWAN'A. SAILBOAT IN THE OCEAN

ROWAN is asleep on the deck. The sea is choppy. A sudden gust fills the mainsail. It swings across the deck. CRACK! ROWAN wakes and rises. delighted.

ROWAN

Alright! A little speed.

she starts pulling in the mainsail - stops and squints- Something is out there, in the waves-

She dives into the sea bobbing up to take a look every few strokes...

Now, she's reaching out --- grabbing MICHAEL's lifeless body. Her arm slings round him - now she's backstroking. one-armed.

They reach the boat- she grabs the rope ladder - and with remarkable strength - pulls him up.

They sprawl on the deck

She rips his shirt open - pressing her ear to his chest. Cursing, she starts mouth-to-mouth.

Nothing- switching to CPR - pressing down on his chest - rhythmically. forcefully-

ROWAN

one - two - three - four - five-..

To fifteen. Nothing- she grabs his face - and slaps him.

ROWAN

Breathe, goddamnit-  
(slaps him again)  
BREATHE!

She starts on his chest again - her pumping is violent now.

ROWAN

You're not - (pump) - gonna - (pump)  
- DIE - (pump) - you sonuvabitch

nothing- Shee slumps back- Gasping. fury rising- suddenly, she rises on her knees - raises a fist - and brings it down - striking his chest with all her might- And MICHAEL's body jerks eerily. water spurts from his south. A rasping cough erupts from him. And his eyes open.

MICHAEL

(hacking- mumbling)

They - they wanted me to come back...

And his eyes close. Out cold. She nods, exhausted - and strokes the matted hair from the gash on his forehead- then - cocking her head. staring intently at him - the manner of her gesture changes - her fingers slide down his cheek --- almost a caress...

EXT. ROWAN'S SAILBOAT AT SEA. LATER

ROWAN stands motionless at the railing, a blanket wrapped round her - watching MICHAEL, on a stretcher, being taken below on the Coast Guard cruiser alongside her boat. It speeds off. ROWAN watches until she can't see it anymore-

INT. A HOSPITAL - THE INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

ATTENDANTS lift MICHAEL from a gurney onto a bed- Two NURSES hustle about as a DOCTOR 50, silver-haired - looks on

DOCTOR

He had a major M.I. two years ago. Get an EKG and see if this did anything to his heart-

MICHAEL'S clothes are cut away - and - he opens his eyes. One NURSE raises his arms while another slides a blanket onto him. The DOCTOR leans to MICHAEL with warm concern--

DOCTOR

Michael - it's Geoffrey-

MICHAEL with a weak nod of recognition The blanket now in place, a NURSE lowers MICHAEL's arms miracles.

DOCTOR

you just made the Guinness book of records, friend - under

- and MICHAEL's hands come to rest on the blanket...

MICHAEL'S POV

The DOCTOR'S face disappears in a blure of WHITE. Then, with a ROAR. The FRAME FILLS with

INT. A LAUNDRAY ROOM [AS IF MICHAEL WHRE THERE]

Washing machines and dryers whirring Three. BLACK WOMAM in hospital greens. folding blankets and laughing- - and then, instantaneously -

BACK TO SCENE - THE DOCTOR STILL LEANING OVER MICHAEL

MICHAEL - freaked -  
raises his hands- -  
Mike.

DOCTOR  
...close to an hour.

...and MICHAEL grasps the bed's handrails tightly. Again - the room explodes inWhite

INT. MICHAEL'S POV - THE ROOM [AS IF MICHAEL WHERE THERE]

A diffirent DOCTOR - defibrilator pads in both hands - is in GEOFFREY's place. He lunges To  
CAMERA -

DOCTOR  
Clear!!

THE POV SWIVELS to REVEAL a YOUNG WOMAN in the bed. The Doctor shocks her --- her liveless body jerks.

DOCTOR  
Give me the atropeen!

A NURSE gjves him a huge hypodermic - and the DOCTOR plunges it into the Woman's heart...  
Suddenly -

BACK TO SCENE

MICHAEL lets go at the handrail - as if shocked - and clasps his hands together. He locks round the room, saucer-eyed. GEOFFREY eyes him carefully as he gives him an injection.

MICHAEL  
What the HELL IS GOING...?!

DOCTOR (GEOFFREY)  
(soothing)  
You where - in the water - a long time.

MICHAEL  
No! Geoffrey, I'm seeing...seeing... There was a - a  
dead  
woman - she was -

GEOFFREY

The shot's kicking in. Sleep now.

HE takes MICHAEL'S hands in his... Suddenly - a FLASH of WHITE -

INT- A DOCTOR'S office [AS IF MICHAEL WERE THERE]

A WOMAN sits on an examination table, her smock down around her waist.  
GEOFFREY puts a  
stethoscope on her breast and listens- She grins, draws her to him - they  
kiss And then, with  
a ROAR -

BACK TO SCENE

GEOFFREY, hands behind his back, stands at the bedside as MICHAEL, groggy  
from the injection.  
Starts to go under.

MICHAEL

(slurred. losing consciousness)

I - I didn't think You - You fooled around with your  
patients,  
Geoffrey...

GEOFFREY cocks his head - stunned - as MICHAEL's eyes close.

DISSOLVE TO

A COMPLETELY WHITE FRAME

Then --- the whiteness swings on an axis TOWARD CAMERA--- a refrigerator has  
been opened -  
revealing an interior filled with beer. A gloved hand reaches in and grabs  
one.

WIDE OF SCENE - A KITCHEN - bar

MICHAEL closes the fridge. A Wreck in a bathrobe - dark circle. under his  
eyes, unshaven and  
snug, leather gloves on his hands. The garbage can overflows with beer cans.  
The phone RINGS.

MICHAEL tries to bend back the cans, pop-top - but the gloves make it tough.  
He smiles grimly.

Takes a knife, pricks the pop-top back, and takes a long swig.

Wobbly, he shuffles out on bare feet- Down a HALL. Through a LIVING ROOM.  
Everywhere,  
stunning execution of design. OC, the phone stops ringing. He enters

AN EXQUISITELY DESIGNED BEDROOM

There is clutter everywhere: newspapers, magazines, books, beer cans.

MICHAEL plops on the  
dishevelled bed. Glances at a magazine. A story title reads:

LIFE AFTER DEATH EXPERIENCES:

AN ANALYTIC APPROACH

Other magazines and books deal with paranormal events, ESP, hands-on healing.  
Across the room,

a TV shows the end of an A T & T comercial- A voice warmly delivers the tagline: 'REACH OUT AND TOUCH SOMEONE.' MICHAEL grins sardonically -

MICHAEL

Fuck you.

OC, the doorbell rings

MICHAEL

No more freak shows! LEAVE ME ALONE!

STU'S VOICE (OUTSIDE)

Mike - it's me! Let me in!

MICHAEL rises - walks to the window - and leans out. STU stands below - at the front door - looking up-

MICHAEL

Go home, Stu (pause) I'll call you.

STU

Bullshit! Let me in! (pause) Mikey - there are people

who can

help figure this ont.

MICHAEL

On which planet...?

STU

You can't just -

MICHAEL

Go away, GODDAMNIT!

He slams the window down and heads tack to the bad.

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM. A WEEK LATER - DUSK

MICHAEL sits before the TV-VCR, stacked with cassettes. On screen, Peter Lorre - wild-eyed, fingers glowing radioactive and deadly - stalks a victim. OC, the HOWL of a fire engine.

MICHAEL cocks his head and with a dreamy look, he stands.

INT. AN ATTIC. MINUTES LATER

MICHAEL, gloved and wobbly, digs through dusty boxes. His face softens - and he pulls out an old. singed Fireman's helmet with the insignia N.0. 17. He lays it down - hesitates - pulls his gloves off reaches out with his hands --- and grabes the helmet...

A SEARING FLASH OF WHITE AND A ROAR

INT. A FIERY, FLAMING BUILDINGG [AS IF MICHAEL WERE THERE]

A FIREMAN - his helmet labelled N.O. 17 - races to an open window with a GIRL in his arms.

Down in the street - other FIREMEN, buffeted by a strong wind. look up, holding a safety net.

The FIREMAN tosses the child down to safety. Suddenly - the window is blown in, shattering.

The FIREMAN falls to the floor - cut and dazed. Above him - the flames dance - and then everything comes down on top of him-

BACK TO MICHAEL IN THE ATTIC

as he is jolted to the floor, one hand grasping the helmet.

EXT - A TREE-LINED STREET [ AS IF MICHAEL WERE THERE]

A battalion of FIREMEN at attention as PALLBEARERS carry a coffin. Seated at a reviewing stand, draped with a black cloth that reads NEW ORLEANS FIRE DEPARTMENT is a WOMAN - 30, silently weeping, dressed in widow's black - and

A SMALL BOY (STRONGLY RESEMBLING MICHAEL)

- 8, in a black suit - holding a singed fireman's helmet with an N.O. 17 insignia. He watches the coffin pass, fascinated.

THE BOYS POV

A tall, wavy-haired MAN in nineteenth-century garb walks solemnly beside the coffin. The Pallbearers don't seem to notice. He gives the Boy a melancholy smile.

THE BOY

Pokes his Mother and points to the man. But she just pats his hand solemnly. She doesn't see what he sees...

BACK TO MICHAEL ON THE ATTIC FLOOR

as he drops the helmet - and weeps

INT. A CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL WARD. DAY

Filled with KIDS. Bandages, casts. eye patches. Playing, reading, watching TV. ROWAN strolls in. smiles at the scene - and approaches the BOY she saved - his head bandaged, he snaps together plastic Lego pieces creating a race car.

ROWAN

So - how fast does it go...?'

BOY

(looking up smiles)

Reallll fast. Seven hundred miles an hour... Mmmmm...  
A minute

ROWAN

Wow! That's almost as fast as my car.

The BOY squints at her- figuring out if she's kidding-

ANGEL - MICHAEL STANDING IN THE DOORWAY

He's watching ROWAN. He is hollow-eyed. gaunt - but clean-shaven in clean clothes. ROWAN is unaware at his presence.

ROWAN

(crouches beside the BOY. quite serious)  
That's if I turn on the retro-burners.

(pause)

Of course, I only do that if I'm being chased.

(the BOY'S eyes pop he's hooked)

Never been caught yet.

She offers her palm - and he slaps her five.

ROWAN

How's your head, Terry--? Feel anything - like a balloon  
in there...?

He shakes his head NO. She affectionately rubs his cheek then rises and beads toward the door.

MICHAEL puts his gloved hands behind his back. And - their alec meet. Almost palpable electricity. A long beat.

MICHAEL

Dr. --- Mayfair...?

She nods - but her face betrays her shock at his appearance.

ROWAN

Mr. Curry- - -

She offers her hand. He hesitates brings a gloved hand from behind his back - and they shake hands. She watches him as he stares at the BOY.

MICHAEL

They like you ----- kids.

ROWAN

(smiles)

I guess so. The trick is remembering how to act like one.

(a beat. soberly)

I'm glad you called, Mr. Curry. I wanted to see you.

(pause)

Why don't we go to my office...

She gestures toward the hall. He nods hesitantly - and they walk OUT OF FRAME.

INT. ROWAN'S OFFICE. MINUTES LATER

Shelves lined with texts on children's diseases and prenatal, postnatal, and infant genetics.

MICHAEL stands perusing the books. ROWAN sits at her desk.

ROWAN

I've read the stories - and seen the news coverage.

MICHAEL

(turns to her- scowls)

'Freak at the week.' That's what the TV crew. call  
it-

(a grim smile)

bring  
teel them  
people come right to the house. They have a husband  
or wife who skipped town - or a missing kid- They  
a sweater or a toy - and ask me to touch it. so I can  
where they are..

Looks her straight in the eye. A wave of current flows.

MICHAEL

I don't remember you at all-

(pause)

it...?  
You - you saved my life- Bizarre thing to say, isn't

ROWAN

(her warm smile)

I'm glad you're around to say it.

MICHAEL

(dark)

My jury's still out on that,

ROWAN

(turns almost sharp)

-  
Then call it in. Mr. Curry. Whatever's happening to you  
death is not the preferable alternative.  
(softening. a grin)  
I'm in the life business - remember..?

H musters a weak smile. Tugs at his gloves. She rises.

ROWAN

(Warm. soothing)

Let's see what we can find out-

EXT. A BOAT DOCK. DAY - AN HOUR LATER

ROWAN and MICHAEL walk down toward her boat. She glances at his gloves.

ROWAN

Do they keep everything 'out' ...?

MICHAEL

As far as touching things, yes. But the vision - that  
keeps  
pouring into my head- (stark) It won't go away God -  
if I  
could just understand it.

They step onto the boat's deck. ROWAN walks to the spot where she revived him, and kneels.

ROWAN

You had no pulse... You were gone.

MICHAEL - tightly-wound - kneels beside her. Squeezes his eyes shut- A deep sigh.

ROWAN

Don't be afraid, Michael.

Her tone - and the use of his name - opens his eyes. An electrified sock between them. He peels his gloves off, flattens his palms on the deck - and waits...

ROWAN

What do you see...?

MICHAEL

(his face is a blank)  
Nothing. Absolutely nothing-

EXT. AN OUTDOOR DECK. DAY - LATER

MICHAEL stands staring down at the dock and ROWAN'S boat- The ocean beyond shimmers. He turns and walks through open glass doors, inside to

A KITCHEN-LIVING ROOM AREA

Rustic, unadorned. Half-walled by the glass doors. MICHAEL sits at a chopping-block island, and stares at his gloved hands- ROWAN pours him a scotch and sits across from him.

ROWAN

Just one. The bar's closed.

MICHAEL

(gulps down the drink)  
The one time I want it to work...

ROWAN

You know - doors and keyholes are common signposts in out-of-body -

MICHAEL

(bristles)  
You're not gonna give me the textbook analysis, are you  
doctor...?  
starved  
My vision was just the chemical reaction of an oxygen-  
brain - and nobody -

ROWAN  
No. I'm not.  
(a beat- enigmatic)  
Doctors should be the first ones to admit utter  
ignorance about  
some things.

MICHAEL nods in surprise. He tries to pull a cigarette from his pack, his  
gloved fingers  
fumbling. ROWAN reaches out and stills his hand with hers. She takes out a  
cigarette, puts it  
in his lips - and lights it. Their eyes lock.

ROWAN  
Touch me.  
(MICHAEL'S brow creases)  
My hands were all over you. Maybe something will come  
from  
me.  
(soft. soothing)  
Touch me Michael-

She holds her hands out to him. He hesitate- staring at her offering. He  
strips off his gloves  
- reaching for her hands - and takes them in his...

A FLASH OF WHITE MELTS TO

EXT. ON THE DECK OF THE BOAT

as ROWAN slams her fist into MICHAEL'S chest - and he jolts to life. she  
caresses his cheek in  
unmistakable longing.

THE IMAGE IS SUCKED THROUGH A HOLE IN ITSELF TO

INT - ROWAN'S KITCHEN [AS IF MICHAEL WERE THERE]

where a MAN - 50, in a bathrobe - lies twitching on tile floor, eyes glazing  
into death- ROWAN  
is crouched beside him, weeping, fists clenched, mumbling Graham...?

ROWAN'S VOICE (OC)  
OWWWWWW....!

SUDDENLY BACK TO ROWAN'S KITCHEN

as ROWAN - with a yelp - wrenches her hands free of MICHAEL'S vise grip. He  
tumbles backwards  
onto the floor. ROWAN races round to him and kneels - cradling his head  
geritly

MICHAEL  
(eyes opening- weakly)  
My gloves...

She grabs them, and slips them on his hands. Her lush hair is tussled by a stadden BREEZE that blows in from the deck.

MICHAEL  
(softly. awestruck)  
I saw it. On the boat, I was - dead. (pause) you brought me back...

Enough electricity to light a city. He takes her hands gently in his.. -

MICHAEL  
...with these.

The BREEZE sends some papers into the air. ROWAN bends to him. Their lips meet in a soft brush or a kiss - and then the gates open. Lips searching- hands tearing at clothes. Limbs entwining. A whirlwind of flesh finds a rhythm. Two pounding; themselves into one- Rough, on-the-edge-

ROWAN  
Harder...

MICHAEL  
Rowan...

ROWAN  
HARDER!

MICHAEL  
Like this...? LIKE THIS...?!

ROWAN  
Yessssss...

INT. ROWAN'S LIVING ROOM. LATER

ROWAN AND MICHAEL lying entwined, naked, before the in the firepalce in the LIVING ROOM- They watch the.flames...

MICHAEL  
you're very --- different.

ROWAN  
I'll bet you say that to all the women who bring you back to life and then seduce you.

she rises on an elbow - with that enigmatic. look.

ROWAN

What else did you see- Michael...?

MICHAEL

(a curious grin)

What're you - a mindreader...?

(a beat. turns solemn)

Who was the man on the kitchen floor. ~.?

ROWAN'S brow knits - stunned. Not what she expected.

ROWAN

(stiff. softly)

My uncle. Graham. He and my Aunt, Ellie raised me.

(pause)

He - he - had a stroke- Just before Ellie died - of cancer.

Last year.

MICHAEL

You knelt there, helpless- You couldn't save him.

(pause)

There was so such anger in you-. Death infuriates

you...

she puts her head back down on his chest. A long beat.

ROWAN

It's unbelievable that you can do that.

MICHAEL

(a beat. turns dark)

It - it feels like - like I'm being filled up. crowded out of

myself. (pause) Like I'm fading away-

ROWAN' slides up face to face. Her eyes filled with warmth

ROWAN

You're here, Michael. All of you.

She leans in and kisses him deeply. And they start again.

EXT. CLOSE-UP - MICHAEL'S FACE FLOATING UNDERWATER

- the water stretching it eerily. PULL BACK to reveal

MICHAEL LYING ON HIS STOMACH ON THE DOCK - DAYTIME  
his head out over the edge, staring at his reflection

MICHAEL

I've always loved them. (pause) New Orleans has these great  
old houses. When I was a kid, I'd look at them,  
thinking -

was nothing...'  
'somebody dreamed them up, put something where there  
it amazed me.

He turns to ROWAN, who suns herself on her back on the dock.

MICHAEL  
My mother and I used to take long walks and make up  
stories about the houses and the people who lived  
inside.

(pause)  
The Queen's house-. the Gangster's house-. the clown's  
house-  
Like that.

ROWAN  
And whose houses do you design...?

MICHAEL  
Oh. The Green underwater Ghost's... The Man With The  
Eyes In His Hands...

ROWAN  
(a beat. watching him)  
You still feel that crazy...?

He passes. Then smiles and shakes his head.

MICHAEL  
No. Not with you.

A long beat.

ROWAN  
I was born, in New Orleans, too-

MICHAEL  
Really...? Your family there...?

ROWAN  
Nope- My father died before I was born. My mother died  
in childbirth. Ellie was my only blood relation. so  
she  
brought me here... the day after I was born.

MICHAEL'S brow creases- He reaches out and strokes her ankle - but she sits  
up. pulling her  
legs away from him. Staring out to sea silently. He stares at her back.

MICHAEL  
Too much... too fast...?

ROWAN  
Mm-hmm. (pause) Scared- I feel a little like the  
moth  
and the flame.

MICHAEL (a beat. softly)

So do I.

She hesitates - turns round to him. And - she stretches her ankle out to him  
- and he grins  
and runs a finger across it.

INT. A DOCTOR'S OFFICE. A WEEK LATER

Geoffrey sits at his desk, phone to his ear.

GEOFFREY (INTO THE PHONE)

...always concerned about his heart - so the fact he  
isn't  
drinking is great.

ROWAN (INTO THE PHONE)

I'll keep you up to date Geoffrey. Goodbye.

PULL OUT to reveal ROWAN, naked, straddling MICHAEL on his back in bed in  
Rowan's BEDROOM,  
naked except for his gloves. He looks better - color in his face the  
circles gone- She hangs  
up the phone and leans over him-

ROWAN

He's very pleased with your response to the  
surroundings.

MICHAEL

He fools around with his patients too.

He points at his gloved hand and wiggles his eyebrows slyly.

ROWAN

you touched him --- and saw him...?  
What was he doing. Kinky...?

MICHAEL

It's come to that, huh...? Three weeks - and you need  
a psychic  
skin flick to perk up our sex life...?

She leans to hit, hair cascading into his face reaches behind her - finds him  
- and puts him  
inside her.

ROWAN

(velvety)

It would appear that's not the case...

INT. ROWAN'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

MICHAEL and ROWAN sit on the floor playing SCRABBLE. She taps the board  
impatiently as he

stares at her letters. He eyes her tapping finger, and looks up at her.

ROWAN

You come back from the dead and you can't make one dumb word...?

He makes a face at her- And looks back down at his letters, his thumb in his cleft. she cocks her head and watches him.

ROWAN

You look very deep when you do that.

(he stops doing it)

It's interesting. We're Complete opposites- I'd never just sit and wait for insparation. I'd skip my turn and swap some letters.

MICHAEL

Ms. yin, and Mr. yang  
(suddenly inspirea)

Aha!

He places some letters on the board. She watches and recites the letters one by one, befuddled.

ROWAN

Y-U-H-E-E-Y-A-H. Yu-hee-yah...? No way, busters use it in a sentence.

MICHAEL

Okay. (a southern drawl) y'all make sure and come back now, reeeeaal soon - yu'heeyah.

She breaks out laughing. He takes a pencil - leans to the score-pad. She lunges for the pencil

ROWAN

Hey - no fair! That's not a word!

They go rolling on the ground, laughing, wrestling...

INT. ROWAN'S SAILBOAT. DAY

Moving swiftly across the ocean. MICHAEL sits - gloved hands on the rudder - watching ROWAN pull in the mainsail.

MICHAEL

Why don't you let at do that...?

ROWAN

Just sit there and soak up the vitamin D.

MICHAEL

Doctor's orders- - -?

ROWAN

Captain's orders.

She ties off the lanyard and sits beside him. Staring out at the scene- A dreamy, contented look.

ROWAN

Perfect.

MICHAEL

(watching her. a beat)

You sure are.

His tone turns her head to him. Her smile dissolves.

ROWAN

Far from it, Michael... Don't put me up there.

MICHAEL

All I meant was -

ROWAN

You don't know what you meant - because you don't know me.

She stares at him- sighs and shaking her head -

ROWAN

Christ, Michael - what the hell are we doing...? We don't even know -

MICHAEL

(his grin blooms)

Is this the part where you try and talk yourself out of how good this is...?

ROWAN

(refusing to smile back)

I'm serious. You don't -

MICHAEL

(not letting it go)

Let's see... Next you tell me all the terrible things about you - and prove that we're doomed to fail - right...? (pause) you hate kittens and puppies, you've drivin all your lovers to suicide --and those mysterious deaths at the hospital were really -

ROWAN

(simmering)

Stop it.

MICHAEL

(his grin dissolves)

You stop it. (pause) you're loving, and gentel..

You're  
telling  
Cause

the most remarkable woman I've ever met --- so stop  
me I don't know what I feel just cause you're scared.  
it won't work.

Their gazes lock- And --- ROWAN'S eyes suddenly fill with tears- MICHAEL'S  
face creases with  
concern. He reactres for her - but she rises- Starts pacing.

MICHAEL

Ro --- what is it...?

A long beat. She finally turns to him -

ROWAN

What you 'saw' --- me in the kitchen - with Grahm -  
was dying...?

when he  
hatred.

(MICHAEL nods)

My anger wasn't frustration Michael. (pause) It was

(MICHAEL winces, stunned)

He tried to molest me while his wife lay half-dead in  
hospital! (pause) Ellie's love was the one thing that  
me to the world. Sha was all I ever had.

the  
connected

(chilling)

At that moment, I hated Graham with a fury you could  
pause)... and that's when he had his stroke.

never imagine...

(a long beat. softly)

I wanted him to die. (pause) Howqqs that for 'perfect'

...?

A tear slides down her cheek- The mainsail SNAPS loudly as it fills with  
WIND. Her tears come  
full-force. sobbing, she lunges into his arms. Se holds her tightly. A  
long beat.

ROWAN

(pained. ashamed)

I'm a doctor, Michael, and I wanted him to die.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE. DAY

ROWAN wanders wide-eyed, stunned by its beauty. She enters the bedroom,  
where MICHAEL stands,

staring at the mess.

MICHAEL

Seems more like a year than a month.

ROWAN

Michael - this place is incredible. You - you're brilliant...

(goes to him)

The things you created...

He nods slowly - and shrugs. She takes his hands in hers.

ROWAN

I called Dr. Styles at the Neurological Institute In L.A., remember...?

(MICHAEL nods)

He said he'd see you. He was intrigued.

MICHAEL

(deadpan)

God knows, I'm intriguing.

ROWAN

(stern)

Michael, do you want to wear those for the rest of your life...?

MICHAEL

(stares at his gloves. a long beat)

ROWAN

You could fly down tomorrow. I could be there the next day

(her warm smile blooms)

I think I can last that long without you.

He slowly nods. Searching each other's eyes. Then a crooked smile curls at ROWAN'S lips. She shakes her head.

ROWAN

We're quite a pair, you and I.

MICHAEL

(matching her grin)

Mad. for each other.

INE. A BEDROOM. LATE NIGHT

Moonlight on a dusty floor. DIEDRE lies motionless in an old brass bed - her open eyes welling with tears. Her wrists and ankles in leather restraints. The window curtains flutter.

CLOSE-UP - DIEDRE'S FACE IN THE MOONLIGHT

as a tear rolls down her cheek - then changes direction - moving across her cheek, and disappears - as if someone had brushed it away. A haunting smile blooms - her eyes close...

INT. AN OPERATING ROOM

ROWAN works feverishly on an OUT OF FRAME patient. Thirteen FIGURES - faces hidden by surgical masks - encircle the operating table - watching silently. ROWAN throws her hands up in despair, her confidence failing.

ROWAN

I - I can't do it!

The others urge her on - imploring, encouraging her.

ROWAN

(pointing OUT OF FRAM. frantic)

But look! LOOK! How can I do it...?

ROWAN SHOOTS UP IN HER BED AT NIGHT

jolted awake by the rain whipping at her windows. The clock says 3 A.M. The rain is like a WHISPER. Every nerve-end at attention. She reaches under the bed and brings up a bat. Heart pounding. Stepping into the hall, reaching

THE DARKENED LIVING ROOM

The WIND MOANS. The rain flows thickly down the glass walls, giving the sky and ocean beyond a weird, melted look.

ROWAN

(tense - but brave)

It somebody's here ---

She whirls round. There - on the deck, is A MAN - wavy hair, achingly handsome, Victorian clothes - THE MAN AT THE FUNERAL PROCESSION IN MICHAEL'S VISION. His hands rest on the glass. The rain seems to go through him. ROWAN raises the bat -

ROWAN

I'll take your goddamn head off.'

she dashes to the glass doors - yanks them open and steps out. But the deck is empty. Drenched. she reaches out - and touches the glass where the man's hands had been- She snatches her hand away quickly - and stares at her fingertips. incredulous.

INT. ROWAN'S KITCHEN. PRE-DAWN

The storm is over. ROWAN sips from a wine glass, staring at her fingertips. she rubs them

together, deep in thought. The phone RINGS once - and the answering machine kicks on

ROWAN'S VOICE (ON THE MESSAGE)  
you've reached 555-2101.

ROWAN comes out of her fog - stands - and heads toward the phone. The caller clears its voice.

A WOMAN'S VOICE (ON THE PHONE MACHINE)  
(a southern accent. hesitant)  
Ellie...? Ellie - are you there...? Dammit. (pause)  
555 - 2 - 1 - 0 - 1  
(pause) Ellie --- this is Carlotta.

ROWAN stops - cocks her head. Who...?

CARLOTTA (ON THE PHONE MACHINE)  
(a sigh. cool measured)  
Ellie - Diedre died at five o'clock this morning.  
(pause) Obviously,  
there are legal matters. Your discretion will be -

ROWAN  
(snatching up the phone)  
Hello...? Who is this...?

CARLOTTA (ON THE PHONE)  
(beat. cool)  
Who is this...?

ROWAN  
Rowan Mayfair. Who's calling...?

CARLOTTA (ON THE PHONE)  
(a long beat. cool)  
I wish to speak to Ellie Mayfair.

ROWAN'  
Ellie Mayfair is --- dead.

CARLOTTA (ON THE PHONE)  
Dead...? (pause) Why was I not notified of Ellie's  
death...?!

ROWAN  
I beg your par---

CARLOTTA (ON THE PHONE)  
(brusk. In command)  
When did she die...?

ROWAN  
(getting angry)  
Who is this...?

CARLOTTA (ON THE PONE)

(a long beat. very cool)  
This is your aunt. Carlotta Mayfair. In New Orleans.

ROWAN stares at the phone, dumbfounded. My aunt...?

ROWAN  
'Carlotta' - or,  
I don't have any aunts - and I've never heard of a  
for that matter - a 'Diedre'! Just who -

CARLOTTA (ON THE PHONE)  
(like a cold blade)  
Diedre Mayfair was your mother.

The sky falls on ROWAN she reels. A long beat.

ROWAN  
(hushed)  
My...mother...?

CARLOTTA (ON THE PHONE)  
(cold. no sympathy)  
Yes. (pause) Listen carefully, Rowan. Have your  
attorney  
contact me at once. There are matters of immediate -

ROWAN  
(reeling)  
But my mother... Ellie said she died -

CARLOTTA (ON THE PHONE)  
(curt. annoyed)  
I understand. All the same

ROWAN  
-Ellie said she died when I was BORN! She's been  
alive...?  
ALL THIS TIME...? Why have I been lied to when -

CARLOTTA (ON THE PHONE)  
I had you sent away.

ROWAN  
(astonished anger)  
Who the hell -

CARLOTTA (ON THE PHONE)  
It was quite warranted by the - situation. (pause) I  
realize this  
her. It's not  
is a shock, but really, Rowan - you never even knew  
as if you've suffered some great -

ROWAN  
(anger exploding)  
What's the matter with you...?! What kind of person are  
you...?!

CARLOTTA (ON THE PHONE)  
A very tired one. I've been up all night - and I would  
.like to rest before the funeral. (pause) Have your lawyer -

ROWAN  
When is the funeral...? (SILENCE) I am coming to my  
mother's funeral!!

CARLOTTA (ON THE PHONE)  
(out of control - for a moment)  
Out of the question (pause) Rowan, coming here will  
not change the -

ROWAN  
I'm coming down there!! And if you put my mother in  
the ground before I arrive, you'll wish you'd never seen my face!  
IS THAT UNDERSTOOD...?!

ROWAN is revving. shaking. A long beat.

CARLOTTA (ON THE PHONE)  
(weary. resigned)  
Lenigan's Mortuary. St. Charles and Carondolet. One  
o'clock.  
(long pause) You should not do this Rowan.

A CLICK on the line.. A dial tone drones... Rowan slowly hangs up.  
Trembling. Her world spinning off its axis.

INT. ROWAN'S BEDROOM. DAWN

ROWAN'S shoving clothes into a suitcase, grabs the phone and pushes re-dial.  
RING. CLICK. A RECORDED voice comes on...

INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM. SAME TIME

MICHAEL lies in bed sleeping. RECORDING  
wires and contacts connected to his forehead and hands.  
Institute. A VOICE  
You have reached  
Neurological  
Patients are  
phone from  
seven P.M. if

reachable by  
BACK TO ROWAN IN HER BEDROOM  
eight A.M. to  
Rowan tosses the phone on the  
you are -  
bed - and continues packing...

INT. SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT TERMINAL. EARLY THAT MORNING

ROWAN at a payphone, phone to her ear, tapping her finger nervously. An airline ticket in her other hand- RING- RING

MICHAEL (ON' THE LINE)

Hello...?

ROWAN

Michael! Jesus I've been trying -

MICHAEL (ON THE LINE)

Rowan...?

ROWAN

Listen. Last night - oh Christ, this'll take forever to explain.

God, Michael...

MICHAEL (ON THE LINE!)

(alarmed)

What's wrong..?

Over the P.A. system - "Last boarding call for flight 6-0-4 to New Orleans..." ROWAN winces

ROWAN

Michael - I have to go - to New Orleans. I'll - I'll call yati when I -

MICHAEL (ON THE LINE)

(alarm rising)

What about you coming down here...?

A long beat. ROWAN makes up her mind.

ROWAN

Go to LAX and get on a flight to New Orleans. Go to the Ponchartrain Hotel and wait for me. I'll call you there.

MICHAEL (ON THE LINE)

Wait a minute. Rowan - what is going on...?

ROWAN

Goodbye, Michael. (long pause) I love you.

She hangs up. And dashes toward the gate with her ticket.

INT. AN AIRLINER ABOVE THE CLOUDS. LATER THAT MORNING

ROWAN alone in her row, asleep. MOVING IN TIGHT, the sounds of the plane fade... Her tongue

darts across her lips sensually. A soft, silky moan. Her body moves - shifting. accommodating. Her breath catches. Her head arches back.

Harder... ROWAN'S VOICE [IN HER HEAD]

Rowan... MAN'S VOICE [IN HER HEAD]  
(it is not MICHAEL'S voice)

Harder... ROWAN'S VOICE [IN HER HEAD]

Like this... LIKE THIS...? MAN'S VOICE [IN HER HEAD]

Yessss... ROWAN'S VOICE [IN HER HEAD]

Always loved you. Rowan. Always... MAN'S VOICE [IN HER HEAD]

She shudders - coming in her sleep. Her eyes open hazily... She straightens up - and winces. Her face creases. Huh...? She feels herself between her legs. Her eyebrows arch...

INT. A FUNERAL HOME. THAT AFTERNOON

Sunlight spilling through high, ornate windows. A hundred people - drinking, smiling. The air is thick with familial intimacy. Floral arrangements have taken the place over. SNAKING SLOWLY THROUGH CROWD. We hear.

WOMAN #1  
God-Only-knows what went on in her head...

MAN #1  
Been in back yet...? Lonigan did quite a job. Best she's looked since the baby. (pause) Sixty-three...?

WOMAN #1  
Sixty-one... I remember, cause Julien was still alive.

The camera clears the crowd and HOLDS on

ROWAN IN THE MAIN ENTRANCE  
- suitcase in hand. bewilderment clouding her face. A MAN - 45, black suit, somber - approaches her. BEATRICE MAYFAIR - 40, a lush figure in a satin dress - turns and stares.

MAN  
Good afternoon. I'm Jerry Lonigan.

May I ask who -

BEATRICE

(sudden realization)

Oh my god... Is it...? Mother of Christ - she's

here...

Heads turn. Voices fall silent.

BEATRICE - eyes welling up - steps to ROWAN.

BEATRICE

You are, aren't you...? You're Rowan!

She hugs a startled ROWAN. In the crowd, SILENCE shifts to an astonished MURMUR. "Deedee's little girl...?" "It must be. Those are Mayfair eyes" "Does Carl know...?"

BEATRICE

Rowan - I'm Beatrice Maytair. Your cousin.

Deedee...you'r mother and I -

we - we grew up together.

ROWAN

(fuzzy)

I want to see my mother.

MAN (JERRY LONIGAN)

(a beat. almost defensive)

We - uh - we did what we could. The skin was... I mean

- Diedre had

really ---

BEATRICE

Be quiet, Jerry.

(takes ROWAN by the arm)

come with me, darling.

She leads ROWAN away. Curious eyes watch. Hands reach out. "Welcome home, cousin" "She's with her maker, sweetheart" ROWAN clutches BEATRICE'S hand. "we're glad you'r here..."

BEATRICE

You hold on tight as you want.

They near a doorway. A smaller room is visibe. Soft voices inside. Shadows move on the walls.

And -CARLOTTA steps IMTO VIEW - cane in hand, whizzened and stiff - but peerless. ROWAN

freezes. She knows this woman no mistake about it. Their eyes locked on each other.

CARLOTTA

(a cold frost of a smile)

You came. (a long pause) I'm your Aunt Carlotta, my

dear.

ROWAN

(glacial)

I want to see my mother. Where is she...?

CARLOTTA

(a hint of a grin)

In the coffin, my dear. where else...?

CARLOTTA looks for a flinch or a wound, but there is none - ROWAN is steel.  
CARLOTTA turns to  
the doorway.

CARLOTTA

Hush up, now. all of you. Deedee's little girl is here.

All the way from

San Francisco. Give her some peace with her mother.

Go on. Get a

bourbon up in the front there. I said MOVE.

People come out of the room, eyeing ROWAN

CARLOTTA

Bea - let go of the girl's hand.

BEATRICE glares - but steps aside. ROWAN comes forward and halts at the  
doorway. She can see  
the edge of the gleaming coffin. A deep breath, and she walks into

THE ROOM

She is alone. Slow steps toward the coffin. ROWAN halts. Standing above  
the coffin...  
Looking down...

Diedre lies in a bed at flowers. Folded hands on a pale blue gown. ROWAN'S  
hand hesitates,  
lightly touches the gown - and then drops to her side. She stares,  
expressionless.

INT. A BACKSEAT OF A TAXI. SAME TIME

New Orleans' Garden tistrict passes by outside the window. Splendid, old  
houses of pink and  
lavender. And now - the MAYFAIR MANSION, in all its tragic glory comes INTO  
FRAME.

MICHAEL (OC)

Pull over!

ANGLE - MICHAEL IN THE BACKSEAT OF THE TAXI

He leans to the window and stares at the house, seized with melancholy. The  
CABBIE pulls over.

MICHAEL

They - they let it. die.

(the saddest of smiles)

God, I loved this house. Used to walk by, rattle a

stick across the

fence...

MICHAEL opens the door and steps out.

CABBIE

Meter's running, mister.

MICHAEL WALKS TO THE GATE

Runs his finger across it and grins. On the other side, blood-red camellia blossoms lie in the grass. He kneels, reaches in and gathers up a few. The rest skirt away in a sudden BREEZE. He rises - and comes face to face with 'The Man' - standing on the other side of the fence - smiling faintly in his Victorian clothes.

MICHAEL drops like a stone. A hand grasps his shoulder. He YELPS - turns to see Aaron Lightner kneeling beside him - then everything goes BLACK.

INT. A STRETCH LIMOUSINE. LATER THAT AFTERNOON

ROWAN stares out from the back seat at the Garden District. Beside her is BEATRICE then RYAN. MAYRAIR - 50, elegant, thin. cool affluence. Facing ROWAN is GIFFORD MAYFAIR - 65, corpulent, a face veined from years of bourbon.

BEATRICE

Down here, darling, we figure: If you're taking a trip to God knows where - might as well have one hell of a going-away party.

GIFFORD

(a gruff chuckle)

In certain cases, hell is the operative word.

BEATRICE

Giff - shuttup. (pause) you're mother was a sweet child, Rowan...

A lost little girl in a world too full of things

SILENCE. Sad glances are exchanged by the relatives.

RYAN

(kind. measured)

Rowan - we're glad you're with us now. Carlotta has always done what's best for the family. We don't always understand, but she's the anchor. Anchors are hard and blunt by nature -

GIFFORD

- and they hurt like hell if they fall on you.

BEATRICE

Gif-ford

ROWAN still stares out the window. A long beat.

ROWAN

I've been lied to my whole life.

Throats clear. Bodies shift in seats.

INT. A BEDROOM. SAME TIME

MICHAEL sleeps in a mahogany bed. Eyes opening, squinting. He sits up. His suitcase on an antique bench - clothes on a valet - a robe at the foot of the bed. He gets up - wobbly - puts on the robe and wanders into

A BEAUTIFUL MAOGANY AND MARBLE PARLOR

where the white-suited AARON LIGHTNER sits on a lush leather sofa, staring benignly, ivory walking stick at his side.

AARON

How do you feel, Michael...?

MICHAEL is still unsteady, off-balance - about everything.

AARON

I'm Aaron Lightner - and this is the Talamasca Retreat in New Orleans.

MICHAEL squints at him. AARON grins.

AARON

Tal - a - mas - ca. From the French.

MICHAEL wobbles - and AARON rises and gently steadies him. So benevolent. patient.

MICHAEL

It was you - on the sidewalk...

suddenly, MICHAEL'S eyes widen - remembering something.

MICHAEL

Jesus I've got - to get to the ho--

AARON

(calm. even)

Rowan's already called the hotel, Michael.

(MICHAEL squints at him - stunned)

At the cemetery by now, I would guess.

Suspicion darkens MICHAEL'S face.

MICHAEL

Cemetery...? How do you know about Rowan ...? I didn't ---

AARON  
With her family. Rowan's mother died yesterday.

MICHAEL  
(scowls)  
Rowan's mother died at childbirth. And she doesn't  
have. any family.

ARRON  
Lies, Michael. Desperate deceptions. (sighs) Rowan has  
stepped  
into a world that's waited centuries for her.

MICHAEL  
You know what, mister...? You're nuts. And I'm  
getting out of here.

He starts back unsteadily toward the bedroom...

ARRON  
We know about the visions, Michael...

MICHAEL freezes. And slowly turns round. ARRON nods wisely.

AARON  
there is great danger...

MICHAEL stares - dumbfounded, shaken, searching AARON'S eyes. such clear  
benevolence...

AARON  
I ask only that you stay here, long enough to be -  
educated. A few  
hours.

MICHAEL  
You sound certifiable. You know that.

ARRON  
(his wise smile)  
Should I think you certifiable if you told me that  
hours ago, you saw  
a phantom materialize before your eyes...  
(BULLSEYE. MICHAEL'S jaw drops)  
I've seen him too, Michael.

MICHAEL blanches. Haunted thoughts racing in his memory.

MICHAEL  
I - r saw him as a child. Lots of times... But no one  
else did.

AARON  
(nodding)

Come. There is a lot to read

EXT. A CEMETERY. SAME TIME - AFTERNOON

ROWAN AND CARLOTTA STAND SIDE BY SIDE  
at the front of the mourners before an enormous flower-laden crypt with  
twelve vaults. carved  
into the top of the crypt is MAYFAIR - and NEVER DIE.

Four MEN slide the coffin inside the one open vault. A BREEZE kicks up,  
sending flowers into  
the air. one lands between CARLOTTA and ROWAN. The old woman bends stiffly  
and picks the huge  
flower up. She smells it and a private smile blooms. The crowd begins to  
drift apart.

ROWAN

(simmering anger. whispers)

She was alive all these years... You NEVER let me know  
her.

Who gave you that right...?!

CARLOTTA

(a narrow smile)

A Mayfair it ever I saw one.

ROWAN

I might as well be Rowan Smith - or Jones! you cut me  
off from  
every -

CARLOTTA

I'm tired. I need to rest.

ROWAN

There are things I have to know!

CARLOTTA nods slowly - turns - and starts away.

CARLOTTA

Come to the house tonight.

She tosses away the flower. The BREEZE swirls it across the ground - and it  
come. to rest at  
ROWAN'S feet.

INT. A ROOM. THAT NIGHT

A rounded gallery. Windowless. An antique desk and two chairs. On the  
walls - twelve, large,  
old portraits. MICHAEL and ARRON enter the room. AARON gestures...

ARRON

All copies. but most are by the original artists.  
Suzanne was the  
first.

MICHAEL looks up at the portrait of SUZANNE MAYFAIR, golden hair spilling from her hood. the pendant round her neck...

SUZANNE [IN MICHAEL'S HEAD]  
Go back, Michael... do what you can...

He whirls to another portrait - DEBORAH, with the scarlet curls and pendant. MICHAEL's hands going to his ears.

DEBORAH [IN MICHAEL'S HEAD]  
Help us, Michael... The door...

He's swirling in a circle. Voices crowding in... And --- ARRONN suddenly grabs MICHAEL'S face tightly in his hands.

AARON  
You've seen them...? when you drowned...?

MICHAEL nods frantically. AARON gently takes MICHAEL'S hands from his ears.

AARON  
Gone...?

MICHAEL nods. AARON leads him to the chair. MICHAEL sits, dazed. On the desk are three, thick, leather-bound volumes.

AARON  
A nexus, Michael. Rowan - the visions - and the Man... Lasher.

(suddenly stern)  
I must know this now: Do you love Rowan...?

MICHAEL nods. AARON nods, satisfied. A beat.

AARON  
The Talamasca is a world-wide... ahhh - organization - but we do not - (grins)- 'publicize.' (pause) We observe and record... the extraordinary. Since the Knights Templar...for eight hundred years (points at the book)  
A history of the Mayfairs. Eyewitness accounts. The original handwritten documents. From 1683 till now. (pause) I am the eighth observer of the family.

ECU - ONE OF THE LEATHER COVERED MAYFAIR HISTORY VOLUMES It reads:

THE MAYFAIR HISTORY - VOLUME ONE  
BY  
PETYR VAN ABEL

AARON (OC)  
Petyr Van Abel was the son of Jan van Abel - a brilliant

pioneer of genetics.

WIDE OF SCENE

AARON

He But Petyr was a troubled soul, with paranormal gifts.  
of renounced science, wandered for years, and met Suzanne  
not Mayfair in Scotland. They fell in love, but she would  
Talamasca. marry. Petyr went to France - and soon joined the

MICHAEL stares at the book, his mind stretching at the seams.

MICHAEL

You - you want me to read all this...?

AARON

I want you No. (pause) If you trust me - if you can be strong --  
to touch it.

Like a sucker-punch.

EXT. THE MAYLAIR MANSION. MIDNIGHT

ROWAN stands at the wrought-iron gate. She walks to the door - raises a hand  
and - CREAK - the  
door opens There is CARLOTTA, cane in hand. Inside, a few candles set  
shadows dancing. A  
large white CAT strolls up to ROWAN and rubs against her leg. CARLOTTA looks  
up to the sky -

CARLOTTA

A moon, but no stars. (grins) Clever.

And she walks back into the house. ROWAN steps inside following CARLOTTA  
down a long hall. Up  
ahead, a door is opening. ROWAN catching up - and stepping through - onto

A PATIO THAT WRAPS AROUND THE OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE

Two chairs. A table with an oil lamp, where CARLOTTA sits, the cat in her  
lap. ROWAN sits.  
CREAK. Everything so old. CARLOTTA lights the lamp. It makes her face an  
amber skull.

CARLOTTA

The house is yours.

ROWAN

(surprised. simmering)  
I don't want the -

CARLOTTA

vest  
funds  
all.

Other properties as well - here and in Europe. And  
holdings - in sugar, oil, gold, electronics. Liquid  
over eighty million. tmpossibile to put a figure on it  
All yours now.

ROWAN  
(disbelieving)  
Eighty million doll --- ?

CARLOTTA  
And this - if you decide to take the rest.

She puts a velvet jewelry box on the table. ROWAN opens it. The emerald  
pendant catches the  
lamplight. ROWAN's eyes rise from the stone and study CARLOTTA closely. A  
long beat. Then the  
old woman grins - and shakes her head.

CARLOTTA  
No, my dear. older than that. I'm eighty-six - next  
month.

ROWAN recoils from her - stunned. Her thoughts were read.

CARLOTTA  
That's right Everything you think, Rowan. Simply a  
matter of  
will and practice (pause) You'll learn.

ROWAN shifts in her chair. CREAK. spooked.

ROWAN  
Why was I taken from my mother...?! And why have I been  
deceived...?

CARLOTTA raises, herself on her cans. And takes up the lamp.

CARLOTTA  
Come.

INT. ECU - THE OPEN MAYFAIR HISTORY OF PETYR VAN ABLE

very old, yellowed parchment - with a faded, neat script.

TILT UP to the portrait  
of SUZANNE in the TALAMASCA  
accent)

GALLERY. MOVE IN and HOLD  
this  
on her beautiful face and her deep,  
green eyes.  
I arrived in

dawn, eighteen

VO NARRATIVE  
(a European

I, Petyr Van Abel, begin  
account for the Talamasca -  
May fifth, 1683.

Donnelaith at

leaving...

years since my

WIDE OF SCENE - THE TALAMASCA GALLERY

ARRON sits beside MICHAEL at the desk. He places a syringe next to the open manuscript.

AARON

In case it becomes too powerful. (pause) I'll be right beside you, Michael

MICHAEL turns a page. Removes his gloves - rubs his hands.

ECU - THE PAGE

PETYR VAN ABLE'S VO

Michael's bare hands come

I feared is true -

INTO FRAM and hover...

in question is my

His fingertips descend -

she is to be

and touch the page...

burned at the stake as a

witch... I was permitted

to see her in her cell...

All that

the lady

Suzanne. And

A FEROCIOUS ROAR - AND A FLASH OF BLINDING WHITE TURNS TO

INT. A DUNGEON. MORNING - 1683 [AS IF MICHAEL WERE THERE]

PETYR VAN ABEL - 35, scarlet hair, grey coat and large black hat - stands in a hall as a HOODED

FIGURE unlocks a door. PETYR steps in. The door shuts. He squints in the darkness.

WOMAN'S VOICE

You'll have no confession from me! Leave - (laughs) - or I'll

turn your teeth into mushrooms!

PETYR

Suzanne - it is Petyr.

Chains rattle and suddenly, SUZANNE - ragged, fettered in chains - is before him. They embrace passionately.

SUZANNE

Oh my love... My sweet loving Petyr.

PETYR

I should never have left you. Never.

SUZANNE

But you are here now. All the years apart are washed away.

They sink into a deep, long kiss. He holds her at arm's length. His face grave and pained.

PETYR

What have you done, Suzanne...? They say -

SUZANNE

(her defiance returns)

No! NOT what they say! (pause) The Baron was beyond medicine.

My - prayer was to save him, not kill

PETYR

Prayer...? Who did you pray to, my love...?

A smile washes over her. She caresses his cheek.

SUZANNE

They are already piling the sticks. There is no time.

(pause)

But Petyr - you must know this now. I have a daughter... We have a daughter.

PETYR freezes with astonishment. She smiles sadly.

PETYR

My God, Suzanne... where - where is -

She silences him with a gentle finger to his lips. Ssshhh...

SUZANNE

Across the sea in St. Domingue. Free from the grasp of fearful men.

The CLINK of a key in the lock. She clutches PETYR to her.

SUZANNE

It is good to have the one you love with you - when it is time to die.

(pause) It will be a special day.

The door opens. Light pours in and BURNS EVERYTHING TO WHITE.

INT. THE MAYFAIR MANSION. LATE NIGHT

ROWAN follows CARLOTTA down a HALL, the walls hung with portraits like those in the Talamasca gallery. CARLOTTA points at a WOMAN - 40, a blood-red gown. wearing the pendant - standing before a pristine version of the mansion.

CARLOTTA

practitioner  
Marquerite. Your great-grandmother. Something of a  
herself, Rowan.

She points at another portrait: DEBORAH - 20, fiery red hair. a bare-shouldered blouse and pants, with the pendant, holding a riding crop - stands before a large house in the tropics.

CARLOTTA  
Deborah, Suzanne's daughter. She started the family fortune. Her plantation covered half of Haiti.

Her crooked finger stabs at another portrait: a MAN - handsome, black-eyed, in elegant long coat and ruffled shirt.

CARLOTTA  
Julien. Your great grandfather. Clever, charming  
Julien... we had our moments he and I... You are forever in his debt.

ROWAN glances at Julien. Lamplight dances on him. Did his smile curl - the black eyes wink...? Her breath catches.

CARLOTTA  
What is it...?

ROWAN  
(spooked. edgy)  
The lamplight. That's all.

They reach a winding staircase at the hall's end. A gust of WIND blows the lamp out. DARKNESS.

CARLOTTA  
You can see well in the dark, Rowan.

ROWAN  
(stiff. simmering)  
Better than most, I suppose.

CARLOTTA  
Put your hatred for me aside, so you can clearly see what is ahead-

A match light - and it burns out the FRAME to a HOT WHITE...

INT. AN INN. DAY

PETYR, hellish and gaunt,  
writes feverishly at a table  
forever...

PETYR VAN ABEL's VO  
I am lost to all,

I've seen  
on fresh parchment.  
If

A sailor  
PETYR glances out the window  
pages  
at a ship in the harbor.  
board

fearing he will  
suddenly, he whirls round.  
innocents to  
looking straight TO CAMERA  
my dread...

THE IMAGE SHATTERS INTO

EXT. A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY TOWN SQUARE. MORNING  
Encircled by shops. A stake at the center, sticks piled at its base. A  
torch burns in a  
stanchion. A church spire towers above it all. PETYR is among the large  
CROWD watching two  
columns of PRIESTS near the stake. Between them is SUZANNE - in a white robe,  
holding a large  
candle. The procession halts. She scans the crowd and finds PETYR. She  
smiles at him. Then  
- her face turns fierce.

SUZANNE

I never did any of you harm! I am UNJUSTLY CONDEMNED!  
I have no love for Satan!

The crowd jeers. "Burn her!" "Witch!" "Send her ashes to Hell!" She hurls  
the candle down.

SUZANNE

Witch, is it...?! (growls) Come now, Lasher! COME!

A RUMBLING, like thunder, fills the air- A WIND begins to swirl. The sky  
darkens. Curses  
from the crowd, as they raise arms and cloaks against the swirling dust.

SUZANNE

My beautiful Lasher - strike down those who would come  
to  
see me die!

The WIND howls. Shutters break free. windows shatter. And from the  
rooftops, tiles - a storm  
of them - shower down on the terror-stricken CROWD. The town is being ripped  
apart - and at the  
eye of the storm. SUZANNE watches, eyes burning.

How to tell what  
and not sound a madman?  
only I were...  
shall shepherd these  
to you. I dare not  
the ship,  
follow and send  
their doom in my wake. I  
have cause for

PANIC. people rush madly, arms over heads, trampling those who've fallen.  
Cries in the WIND.  
Blood puddles the ground. Shops burn. Bodies piled at every doorway.  
Armageddon.

PETYR stands in the center of the chaos, near a frantic PRIEST.

PRIEST

Where is she...?! FIND HER!

SUZANNE (OC)

Petyr!

SUZANNE IS HIGH UP ON THE CHURCH PARAPET

She leaps off - flying down, robe rippling in the stork and crashes down atop the Priest.

PETYR - tears flowing - kneels at her broken body - and gently takes her hand in his.

A MAN'S VOICE (UNSEEN)

(powerfull. booming)

Petyr Van Abel...!

PETYR looks up - and races away - just as the looming church tower sways - and comes crashing down...

INT. DIEDRE'S ROOM. LATE NIGHT

CARLOTTA and ROWAN appear in the doorway.

CARLOTTA

This was her room.

ROWAN cocks her head and sniffs. She gags...

ROWAN

My god...

She approaches the brass bed - its leather restraints hanging loose, its grimy, stained mattress is bare.

ROWAN

You kept her in this filth in restraints...?.

CARLOTTA

She didn't feel them

ROWAN

(through gritted teeth)

You're a monster.

CARLOTTA is at a window, pointing to the patio below.

CARLOTTA

Antha...your grandmother...her life ended there, on the

stones. Head split open like a melon.

ROWAN

Why are you doing this...? Handing out these horrors!

Why...?!!

CARLOTTA

(turns and looks ROWAN over)

You have the Mayfair eyes. (pause) Tell me, Rowan ---  
what have those eyes seen that the mind can't

fathom...?

Their eyes lock. The lamp's flame dances in the BREEZE.

CARLOTTA

(knowing. chilling)

He's shown himself to you... on the deck. In the

storm.

ROWAN

(really spooked now. a beat)

'He'...?

CALOTTA

(reading her mind)

And on the plane - he touched you!

ROWAN

(stunned. off-balance)

Shut up!

CARLOTTA

Lasher touched you and you loved it.

ROWAN

It wes a dream...!

CARLOTTA

Just like your mother - and all the others that felt

him -

and used his power - and went to hell with a smile!

ROWAN

Stop it!

CARLOTTA

Witches. Rowan. that is what we are.

ROWAN

ENOUGH!!!

ROWAN slams the wall. Her fury rises. Trembling. CARLOTTA suddenly  
flinches. A hand to her  
forehead. A deep breath.

CARLOTTA

Ahhh... You are strong.

ROWAN starts for the door. CARLOTTA shuffles after her.

CARLOTTA

Save your anger for him! Let it keep you strong - as I have I've fought his all my life... used my power and anger to turn him away! (pause) Diedre was not so strong. That is why I kept your mother a morphined, mindless shadow.

ROWAN freezes at the door - and turns back to CARLOTTA.

CARLOTTA

stones -  
And that is why I pushed your grandmother onto the even as she had him inside her...

ROWAN

You're mad! Your mind is sick!

CARLOTTA

beautiful monster.  
desires -  
...and why I put thirty years between you and the To kill the legacy! (pause) you are the sum of his

ROWAN

(a hateful hiss)  
You - are - a - murderer.

CARLOTTA

with their mind.  
(a beat. a chilling grin)  
But I had to use my hands. None before you could kill

(ROWAN stands frozen)

Graham, my dear. Your uncle...?

BULLSEYE. ROWAN steps back in horror. The curtains flutter. ROWAN backing up, unsteady, down the hall. Furious. Haunted. CARLOTTA advancing something falls OC. CRASH!

ROWAN

No! You're wrong! you're wrong!

She has backed up to the staircase. She trips aver the cat YOWL - and grabs the bannister.

CARLOTTA comes face to face.

CARLOTTA

what you  
Did you like it...? Looking down at Graham and knowing could do...?

ROWAN

(erupting. out of control)  
I'm NOT like you! I'm NOT! You're cruel -

CARLOTTA suddenly winces- Eyes squeezing shut in pain.

ROWAN

- twisted -

(a jagged moan from CARLOTTA)

- vicious ! You vile, old -

CARLOTTA'S hands fly to her head. Her cane topples and RAT-TA-TAT'S down the staircase. She wobbles - equilibrium going... ROWAN comes out of her blind fury and grabs her.

ROWAN

Oh my god... I - I --- (pause) Are you alright...?

(shakes CARLOTTA)

Carlotta...? Carlotta!!

And CARLOTTA - wounded, stunned - slowly opens her eyes.

CARLOTTA

You're more dangerous than I knew... You're strength will make

him more than he has ever been.

(cold. piercing)

I should have killed you.

ROWAN, releases her - pierced, rocked by the words. And she races down the stairs into darkness

CARLOTTA

I SHOULD HAVE KILLED YOU WHEN YOU WERE BORN!!!

WHACK! The door to Diedre's room SLAMS shut. CARLOTTA whirls round toward it. The WIND MOANS.

ON THE FIRST FLOOR LANDING - AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS  
ROWAN freezes in her tracks at the sounds.

BACK ON THE SECOND FLOOR

A gust of WIND whips at CARLOTTA'S dress. She grabs the bannister for support. A piercing

WHISTLE in the WIND. CARLOTTA winces. Grabs her head. The cat MEOWS.

CARLOTTA

So it's now- when I'm weakened.. (pause) you wretched obscenity...

Blood trickles from her nose and mouth. An inner cataclysm jolts her - her grip slips - she topples down the stairs...

ON THE FIRST FLOOR LANDING - THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS

ROWAN is frozen. KATUNK-KATUNK-KATUNK... - out of the DARK, CARLOTTA tumbles down the stairs to ROWAN'S feet.

ROWAN stares wide-eyed - then quickly kneels beside CARLOTTA, grabbing her limp wrist, checking for a pulse. She puts her ear to CARLOTTA's chest... she's dead. ROWAN stares in horror --- then something shifts in her face. Something unknowable suddenly known. Suddenly believed.

ROWAN

You're here.

SILENCE. She walks slowly down the hall past the portraits. Stopping with her back to a huge mirror in an ornate frame.

ROWAN

I know you're here. (pause) You killed her, didn't you... (pause)

Come out, you bastard!

Behind her, in the mirror - a foggy phantasm drifts across the glass - and is gone. ROWAN looks down. At her feet is the emerald pendant. She picks it up. OC, down the hall - the TINKLE-TINKLE-TINKLE of glass. ROWAN walks into

THE LIVING ROOM

Dust and decay. Cracked leather chairs. A chandelier of a hundred cut-glass pieces. Does it sway slightly...?

ROWAN

What did she call you --- Lasher...?

She whirls round. There in the corner - the shimmering, transparent specter - handsome, angular. Rowan is stunned - but still. They eye each other.

ROWAN

What are you...?

The specter flickers - and disappears. Sfle dashes to where it was... And then --- hands are clutching; her from behind. She SHRIEKS --- she is twisted round --- and she looks into MICHAEL'S face - and violently clings to him.

MICHAEL

What is it...?! Tell me!

She tries to find words. suddenly - her head swivels from here to there - looking round the room...

ROWAN

There's something - someone --- here.

He stiffens - and glances round the room

MICHAEL

Where's Carlotta...?

ROWAN shivers - and slowly, she points to the hall. He takes her hand. she's like a mule. holding her ground. He has to pull her with him, out into

THE DARK HALL

and down to the foot of the stairs. There lies CARLOTTA. MICHAEL stares drop-jawed.

MICHAEL

Jesus christ...

(a beat)

was it --- a man...?

ROWAN

(stunned)

But how did - how could you ---

From the DARK at the top of the stairs - FFFTT-FFFTT-FFFTT. They freeze, and peer into the BLACKNESS. FFFTT-FFFTT... MICHAEL picks up CARLOTTA's cane. names it high. It's coming down the steps... closer... And - something LEAPS out at that trot the DARK...

ROWAN

Michael...!

MICHAEL swings lethally - and the cat soars past him - YEEOWWLLL! - and scampers away. They both exhale with spent fear - and look at each other.

ROWAN

(a long beat)

You know...?

MICHAEL

(a slow nod)

I know. It's not possible --- but I know.

A long beat. ROWAN is starting to tremble. She looks down at CARLOTTA'S crumpled body.

ROWAN

She - she said I - I was a ---

MICHAEL

- a witch.

ROWAN looks back up at hit --- and nods.

INT. THE MAYFAIR MANSION PORCH. AN HOUR LATER.

ROWAN sits hollow-eyed in the rocking chair. MICHAEL stands behind her, his gloved hands on her shoulders.

ROWAN  
(quiet astonishment)  
A whole town...?

Me nods gravely. He starts to pace, desperate for logic.

MICHAEL  
It could've been a tornado - or a - a hurricane. Maybe

-

ROWAN  
Michael - I saw him! Twice!  
(a long beat. very softly)  
Carlotta said I --- killed Graham - with - with my  
anger.

MICHAEL  
Ro - you can't really believe that. Nobody can murder  
someone with  
their feelings. I mean --- that's CRAZY.

ROWAN  
(an eyebrow arches)  
Is it more or less crazy than dying and coming back to  
life with  
hands that can see...?  
(that silences him. a beat)  
God, Michael --- what am I...?

A CORONER comes out the front door with GIFFORD. PARAMEDICA carry a body bag out toward an ambulance. GIFFORD walks to ROWAN and MICHAEL. They watch the ambulance pull away.

GIFFORD  
(sighs. somber)  
Likely a stroke. (pause) we all got used to  
thinking she'd live forever. (pause) Well -  
she made it clear No ceremony, just cremation.  
pause) Diedre. . now Carl... (pause) You get some  
sleep now. Both of you.

He kisses ROWAN - and he walks off toward a Cadillac at the curb. A long beat. MICHAEL takes ROWAN by the hand.

MICHAEL  
C'mon. Let's go to the ho---

ROWAN  
(jabs a finger at the house)  
He's in there!  
(whirls to the garden)

are you, Or are you out for a stroll in the garden ...?! where  
goddamnit...?!

MICHAEL grabs her firmly - and shakes her.

MICHAEL  
Even if it's all true - that doesn't make you a witch!  
It's 1992, Rowan!

ROWAN  
(her shoulders sag)  
But it scares the hell out of you, doesn't it.

Michael...?

He hesitates - and takes her by the hand. TRACK with them as they go down the walk and - HOLD on the swinging gate as they walk OUT OF FRAME. TRACK back along the walk, up the steps, to the motionless rocking chair, where the cat has curled up. The chair starts to rock.  
RRMMFF-SQUEAK-RRMMFF...

INT. THE OPERATING ROOM IN ROWAN'S DREAM

ROWAN works feverishly on an OUT OF FRAME patient. The MASKED FIGURES watch silently. ROWAN throws her hands up in despair, her confidence failing.

ROWAN  
I - I can't do it!

The FIGURES urge her on - imploring, encouraging her.

ROWAN  
(pointing OUT OF FRAME frantic)  
But look! LOOK! How can I do it...?

OC - a muffled CRY. TILT DOWN SLOWLY - the edge of the operating table comes INTO FRAME - and on it, a tiny hand...

ROWAN IS A HOTEL ROOM  
writhing in a bed. It is MORNING. She screams -

ROWAN  
LOOK!

MICHAEL lunges INTO FRAME. grabbing her, shaking her. She shoots up wide-eyed, sweaty, haunted...

ROWAN  
I had it again. I can't save it - I don't know what to do...

INT. THE TALAMASCA GALLERY

ROWAN sits at the desk, the Talamasca manuscript opened to the last page.  
MICHAEL stands  
staring at Julien's portrait. ARRON refills ROWAN'S coffee cup - and nods...

AARON  
Many times over the past thirty years. Why he shows  
himself to  
me, I don't know but Lasher's not some mindless wraith.

ROWAN  
Then what is he...?

AARON  
A spacial entity. An organized energy. something that  
precedes  
our definition of existence.

MICHAEL  
A what...?

AARON  
A spirit. Perhaps evil... (to ROWAN) ...and he has  
come to you-  
with Diedre gone - you've... inherited him.

Both Men stare at her.

ROWAN  
Stop looking at me like that! I'm not some siren  
chanting to the moon. And my life is not a cosmic  
whim! I am in charge of my life -  
(a long heat. resolved. firm)  
- and I want to stay.  
(MICHAEL does a double-take)  
Everything that was taken from me is here, Michael.  
All these years, she was there without me. Helpless.  
I should have been here.

MICHAEL  
(coming to her)  
Rowan... Think of what's in that book. Think of last  
night!

ROWAN  
I am! (a sad grin) And so are you. (pause) You  
thought you'd found yourself a nice, sensible doctor.  
pause) Michael, if you don't want -

He silences her with a finger on her lips. A long beat.

ROWAN  
Do you love me, Michael...?

MICHAEL  
Yes. I love you. Very much.

ROWAN  
I've come home, Michael, for the first time. I want to  
stay here -  
with you.

A long beat. MICHAEL glances at AARON. AARON shrugs.

AARON  
Going away doesn't mean you leave Lasher behind.  
He was on Rowan's deck - and the plane... geography  
seems irrelevant now.

ROWAN  
Michael - you loved that house as a child. You could  
work again! You could make it ours. We'll sweep out the  
horror. And Lasher with it!

MICHAEL eyes her. Thinking. Intrigued in spite of his fear.

MICHAEL  
It'd take mounths... and cost a fortune.

ROWAN  
(a sly grin)  
I'm soon to be a very wealthy witch.

A long beat. They look at each other with loving eyes.

INT. ROWAN AND MICHAEL'S HOTEL ROOM. LATE NIGHT.

MICHAEL and ROWAN' lie still in each other's arms. A beat.

MICHAEL  
What about your work back home...?

ROWAN  
They need doctors in New Orleans too. (pause) Michael  
- think what  
I could do with the money!

MICHAEL frowns begrudgingly. He rises, walks to the window and lights a  
cigarette. staring at  
the night. she watches him. He sends a stream of smoke out the window.  
Finally:

MICHAEL  
You really felt him - inside you...?

She comes up behind him. Her hands slip round his waist.

ROWAN  
It was like a dream. It wasn't real.

MICHAEL  
But it wasn't a dream. And he is real.

She takes his face in her hands - and shakes her head.

ROWAN

This is real.

And she kisses him deeply.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. THE MAYFAIR MANSION GARDEN. A WEEK LATER - DAY

STU - hands on hips, a suitcase at his feet - and MICHAEL in overalls and gloves - look up at the decayed Mansion.

STU,

Didn't I see this thing in psycho...?

MICHAEL

Just call me Norman.

STU

Well, Normie - you won't have to worry about this one being finished for a lonnnng time.

(MICHAEL grins)

How are the hands...?

MICHAEL

The guy I told you about - Aaron...? He says I can learn to control them. That I could lose the gloves at some point.

BZZZZ. Something flying round their heads. STU, swats at it.

MICHAEL

'Leave bees be - and the bees be nice.' Didn't your father ever teach you that...?

STU

(swats again)

That's a wasp. Fuckers'll sting a tree if they're bored- (pause) so - where is she...?

MICHAEL jabs a thumb toward the house.

STU

(an old Jewish Man accent)

You found a nice doctor. Tank Gott. She makes a nice living, Mikey...?

And out the front door comes ROWAN - jeans and t-shirt, hair tied back. STU starts, beauty-stunned, wide-eyed.

STU

Wow...

MICHAEL

(blase)

If you like that type.

ROWAN

(sticks her hand out with a smile)

Rowan Mayfair.

STU

Sut McKinley. (strightfaced) Marry me.

ROWAN

(her smile widens)

I thought you were almost engaged, Stu...?

STU

(a deflated frown)

You really love this guy...?

ROWAN

(links her arm in MICHAEL'S)

He's got great hands.

STU

Hey - I love gloves- I look really great in gloves.

ROWAN

(appraises STU)

I like him. He can stay.

STU, smiles, and bows. MICHAEL hands him a sheet of paper.

MICHAEL

These are the best guys around. Double up on the carpenters.

(to ROWAN) Let us examine the patient, Doctor.

STU grins - and ROWAN and MICHAEL head for the house.

INT. THE MANSION - A HALLWAY. DAY

ROWAN watches as MICHAEL snaps off a rotted floor plank. He looks over the exposed joists with expert eyes.

INT. THE MANSION - A BATHROOM. DAY

MICHAEL inspects the studs behind a cracked plaster wall. ROWAN leans in and blows hard.

Plaster-dust flies into MICHAEL'S face. He lunges for her and she scoots away.

INT. THE SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY. DAY

MICHAEL and ROWAN, mucked up and dusty, walk along.

ANGEL - A TRACKING POV

from behind them - coming up swiftly --- BZZZZ-PTIT-BZZZZ-PTIT - and zipping past them and HOLD on a DOORWAY as they arrive there. It is Diedre's room. SILENCE. MICHAEL sticks his head in.

MICHAEL

This is her room...?

They walk inside. We've not seen it in the light. Frayed dolls on a shelf. A bowl of tarnished jacks. A doll house.

ROWAN

(melancholy smile)

The closest I'll ever get to her...

She turns to an antique toy chest, raises the cover. CREAK.

ROWAN

Oh Michael, look!

He reaches down and lifts out a marionette by the wooden slats. It dangles on its strings. He flicks his hand - the marionette does a jig. ROWAN'S eyes have welled with tears.

ROWAN

I'll bet she had a wonderful smile.

MICHAEL

(watches her. a beat)

Let's see.

Her face creases in contusion - then widens in understanding-.

ROWAN

You sure...?

MICHAEL

(nods with a smile)

It's the next best thing to being there' - right...?

She melts with love. MICHAEL tugs the glove off his free hand with his teeth, reaches out - and grasps the marionette. A FLASK OF WRITE...INTO

INT. DIEDRE'S ROOM [AS IF MICHAEL WERE THERE]

Forty years of decay have vanished. DIEDRE - 7, in pink jumpers - on the floor on her knees.

She holds the marionette suspended by its slats.

MICHAEL'S VOICE

She's - she' beautiful Ro. (pause) Can you hear me...?

(pause) she's

six, maybe seven. An ear to ear grin. Ro, she's so -

The marionette starts to dance wildly - but DIEDRE'S hands are motionless. The marionette dances by itself. Suddenly - LASHER is leaning over her shoulder. He puffs his cheeks - and blows. The marionette does a jig. DIEDRE giggles...

LASHER  
(a loving whisper)  
I love you.. .

He kisses her softly. Then - LASHER looks up, straight to CAMERA (to MICHAEL) - and smiles...

BACK TO MICHAEL AND ROWAN  
as MICHAEL drops the marionette. ROWAN darkens with concern.

MICHAEL  
(musters a smile)  
I'm okay. (pause) Could you hear me...?

ROWAN nods slowly - trying to read him. He takes her hands.

MICHAEL  
She was the happiest mop-top you've ever seen. With a wonderful smile.

She hugs him tightly - and doesn't see his smile disappear.

EXT. THE MAYFAIR MANSION. A FEW DAYS LATER

The house is changing. WORKMEN everywhere. Scaffolding rises to the roof. The sweet cacophony of construction.

INT. THE MANSION - THE MAIN HALL. THE SAME TIME

ROWAN opens the front door. In marches BEATRICE with a basket. GIFFORD follows with a brightly-wrapped package.

BEATRICE  
Make way for the welcome wagon, darling. We're here to raise some hell.

She starts unpacking the basket: Bourbon, soda-water, crabs, lobsters, plates and utensils.  
ROWAN watches with a smile.

BEATRICE  
I hope Ryan explained that if you stay in this town, you're shackled with pushy relations for the rest of your life.

ROWAN  
(straight-faced)

He made that quite clear, yes.

BEATRICE

Gifford - that box glued to your hands...?

GIFFORD grunts, and offers the package to ROWAN She goes at the wrapping. Opens the box - and peeks inside. Her smile widens. She pulls out a gold saw, screwdriver and hammer.

BEATRICE

Aren't they gauche...? (pause) Those steel things are so - common.

ROWAN

(deadpan)

Nothing worse than a common tool.

MICHAEL comes down the stairs - covered with grime.

MICHAEL

There he is!

MICHAEL sees the group - and gets a good looking-over as he arrives.

ROWAN

Everyone - this is Michael curry.

MICHAEL

Hello..

ROWAN

Michael - this is Beatrice Mayfair. And this is her brother, Giff---

BEATRICE

(taking MICHAEL by the arm)

Never mind them - you handsome, dirty man.

(starts leading him off)

I'm going to tell you my darkeet secrets. then - if you can still speak - you can tell me yours.

MICHAEL looks over his shoulder at ROWAN with a grin as he is led away.

EXT. THE MAYFAIR MANSION - THE PORCH. LATER THAT AFTERNOON

GIFFORD sits rocking while MICHAEL shoots a bourbon with soda and gives it to him. BEATRICE and ROWAN stroll in the garden in the BG. WORKERS move IN and OUT OF FRAME. GIFFORD takes a long slug of his drink.

GIFFORD

The Mayfair women have always ruled the roost. The men pour the

to complain

bourbon - but the women buy it (grins) No one seems  
though.

MICHAEL

I don't drink.

GIFFORD

We all have our faults.

ROWAN AND BEATRICE STROLLING IN THE GARDEN

BEATRICE

Deedee came home middle of freshman year --- pregnant.  
well --- they  
professor...but he  
sent for the father - your father... some assistant  
died in a car wreck on the way - near Nashville...  
(glances at ROWAN'S shock)  
You didn't know...?

ROWAN somberly shakes her head NO.

BEATRICE

Carl was set on an abortion - but Julien wouldn't hear  
of it. (smiles)  
Quite a man, your great grandfather. He truly adored  
Deedee. Truly.  
(a beat)  
Day you were born. Carl announced Ellie was taking you  
away.  
swallowed Deedee  
Julien had a fit. But Carl won. (sighs) Life just  
up after that.

ROWAN stands silent. BEATRICE links her arm in ROWAN'S.

BEATRICE

Listen, darling - I figure you hear it all now, shed  
your tears, then you  
pour yourself a big drink of this life - and bottoms  
up.

She smiles warmly. They Look toward the porch and the men.

BEATRICE

You two seem like a perfect fit. (pause) Only two  
mouths...?

ROWAN

Mm-hmm. (pause) Seems a lot longer.

BEATRICE

In the bayou, they have a saying... 'You choose the  
music for the



MICHAEL  
NO, I won't marry you. (grins) Well, go on --- do your  
stuff.

She grins - and peers at him with one eye closed.

ROWAN  
come clo-o-o-o-o-ser...

MICHAEL leans all the way down to her. she whispers in his ear. His  
eyebrows go up --- and  
up...

MICHAEL  
You're a ve-ry bad witch, you know that...?

ROWAN  
(a wicked, sexy grin)  
No, I'm ve-ry good --- and you aught to know.

Their smiles bloom and they sink into a lonnnng, deeeep kiss.

INT. MAYFAIR AND MAYFAIR LAW FIRM - A CONFERENCE ROOM. DAY

ROWAN, RYAN and GIFFORD, sit around the table, smiling

ROWAN  
Soon. We haven't decided. A tew weeks...?

GIFFORD  
Wonderful! (chuckles) New Orleans air. It makes folks  
want to mate.

RYAN  
We'd better get to work on the papers.

ROWAN  
Papers...?

RYAN  
Standard for a Mayfair marriage.  
(ROWAN frowns)  
Rowan - there is a codicil concerning the Mayfair  
assets. They must be... aahhh... held separate from  
the other party... Michael that is it's in the  
will - for centuries. Tradition enjoins, Rowan.  
(pause)  
of course, future earnings from your practice will not  
fall into -

ROWAN  
(taking command)  
I've decided not to open a practice here (pause) I  
want to set up a research clinic. For infant genetic  
disorder.

RYAN and GIFFORD glance at each other. Interesting...

RYAN

That's new territory for us...but yes, we can look into that. Explore shelter possibilities, funding bodies. we could -

ROWAN

clinic -  
Clinic.

No tax shelters. No funding. I want to fund the exclusively. (pause) The Diedre Mayfair Research

(RYAN turns a little green)

immediately

I'd like to find an existing building and move in - while we draw up plans for new construction.

RYAN

(a beat. slowly leans forward)

That would mean liquidating sizable amounts of cash.

ROWAN

I plan on liquidating almost everything.

Knock RYAN over with a feather. GIFFORD chuckles walks to a sideboard and pours himself a drink.

ROWAN

our names.

We'll put something aside for me and Michael - in both

(pause) The rest goes to the clinic.

RYAN stares balefully. GIFFORD raises his glass.

GIFFORD

A toast: To the birth of a marriage -  
(glances with a grin at RYAN)  
- and the death of tradition.

EXT. THE NEW ORLEANS WATERFRONT. DAY

AARON and MICHAEL stroll past a saxophonist on the pier. A riverboat cruises down the muddy mississippi.

ARRON

- and the  
the  
(pause) The  
first thing

When I was six, I visited my mother in a hospital ward  
beating of hearts almost knocked me over. I could feel  
mechanisms of life, Michael - and it terrified me.  
Talamasca taught me how to find my center. That's the  
we learn --- all of us with gifts.

They turn now into

JACKSON SQUARE

Artists doing portraits, fortune tellers, clowns, jugglers. Soft jazz comes from behind shadowed, filigreed balconies.

AARON

It's about fear, Michael. Fear is the loss of an anchor. You must find your place amongst everything. Then the fear will leave - and then you can decide what gets in - and what doesn't.

MICHAEL

No scaredy-cats in the Talamasca, huh...?

AARON

There is a difference between sensing danger - and being afraid. (pause) what defines you in the landscape, Michael...? what anchors your life...? Your work...? Your creativity...?

MICHAEL

(a beat)

Rowan.

AARON

Then focus on how you feel about her. Because your feelings define you. (pause) Take off your gloves, Michael.

AARON stops at an old, iron hitching post with a horse's head at the top, embedded in the sidewalk. MICHAEL hesitates - and takes his gloves off.

AARON

Now - do you want to let anything in...?  
(a beat. MICHAEL shakes his head)  
Then don't. (pause) Touch it. Michael.

MICHAEL takes a deep breath - stretches his hand out and touches the post. A long beat. He sighs in relief. They look at each other - and AARON nods warmly.

INT. THE MANSION - MICHAEL AND ROWAN'S ROOM. NIGHT

ROWAN - in a robe - sits on the bed, brushing her hair. MICHAEL - in pajamas - watches, and lights a cigarette.

ROWAN

Smoking is bad for your heart, Michael.

MICHAEL

Hey - I'm getting married in the morning - I already gave up drinking.

one crutch at a time, Doctor.

She scowls. He stubs out the cigarette - takes the brush and starts brushing her hair.

MICHAEL

You're just afraid I'll drop dead before I finish the damn house.

ROWAN

And I thought I was the mindreader.

MICHAEL

(grins. a beat)

I took off my gloves today - with Aaron -  
(she whirls round)  
- and it was okay.

ROWAN

That's GREAT!

MICHAEL

(the wistful grin)

when I was...  
me, Ro. They  
love you. I like seeing  
He scratches at his cleft. She grins lovingly...  
Guess so. (pause) I keep thinking about the witches -  
down there (pause) There was - caring. They saved  
said 'go back'... Well- I came back - to you - to  
it that way, y'know...?

ROWAN

Why do I love when you do that. - -?

She pushes his gloved hand away - and rubs his cleft affectionately with her finger. She grins.

ROWAN

rectitude or  
Aren't we supposed to love somebody for their moral  
their courage or their beneficence -

MICHAEL

Their what...?

ROWAN

in your chin...?  
So how come I love you most when you stick your finger

She gives him a kiss.

MICHAEL

Wanna snack...?

ROWAN

A little wine...?

And he leaves. ROWAN smiles to herself - and starts brushing her hair. She picks up a hand mirror to see the results... LASHER'S face locks back at her, just over her shoulder. She jumps a mile - whirls round... There is no one there. She slowly looks back to the mirror - there is his reflection again, with his melancholy smile. Her face hardens.

LASHER

I am with you. (pause) You yearn to know me - so I am with you.

you call me --- and I love you all the more for that.  
(gentle. poignant)

I know how the desert flower feels when it drinks of the rain.

ROWAN is motionless, entranced by his words, by the music of his voice. Translucent hands seep out of the mirror and frame her face. caressing her.

LASHER

You do not love Michael How can you love - if you lie...?

ROWAN

Lie...?

LASHER

There are things you will not tell him.

She raises an eyebrow. He strokes her. Her eyes close in sensual contentment. Spectral fingers caress a breast...

ROWAN

Michael is healing. If I hide things from him - it's because love him.

LASHER takes this in. Does he smile...?

LASHER

Then you will lie to him about me - won't you...?

ROWAN'S eyes snap open - narrowed in anger. Heating up from within. Focused on the mirror. Suddenly the glass SHATTERS - piece falling to the floor.

LASHER'S VOICE

You grow stronger...

And a spectral image of MICHAEL rises in slivers from the scattered shards - like a shredded, willowy phantom.

LASHER'S VOICE (IN MICHAEL'S FORM)  
Can he make you feel as I do...?

MICHAEL COMES THROUGH THE DOORWAY  
with a sandwich and a glass of wine. And LASHER is gone.

MICHAEL  
(chewing. bad French accent)  
A chardonnay, mademoiselle - pleasantly mild, but  
pretentious.

ROWAN stares at him - between two worlds. He sees the shattered glass - and  
comes to her. Her  
hand is bleeding.

MICHAEL  
Hey - you're bleeding.

ROWAN  
(fuzzy. hollow)  
Dropped it.

MICHAEL grabs a tissue - and starts to wrap her hand.

INT. THE MANSION. A ROOM. THE NEXT MORNING

MICHAEL - in wedding attire - tries to do his tie with gloved fingers. STU  
pushes MICHAEL'S  
hands away and starts tying it.

STU  
You okay...?

MICHAEL  
Just nervous. Getting married, you know. (pause)  
Got the rings...?

STU,  
what rings...?

MICHAEL shoots him a look - just to make sure he's kidding.

MICHAEL  
Get out of here. I'm gonna have my final cigarette. I  
promised  
Ro I'd quit.

STU pats him affectionately on the cheek --- and leaves.

MICHAEL lights up a smoke closes his eyes - takes a deep drag - and exhales.  
The thick smoke  
floats in the air... and it coats LASHER'S translucent form - making him  
visible. standing  
inches in front of MICHAEL. LASHER blows gently at the smoke - and it floats  
back toward  
MICHAEL'S face...

MICHAEL opens his eyes --- LASHER is gone. MICHAEL puts on his coat - and walks out...

INT. THE MANSION - ROWAN AND MICHAEL'S ROOM. SAME TIME

ROWAN stands in her wedding gown. BEATRICE - in a gold dress - adjusts ROWAN'S cleavage to a more daring angle.

BEATRICE

Always give the crowd a taste, darling.  
(reaches to the jewelry box)  
Now - Ryan said I'm supposed to make sure -

ROWAN

(suddenly cold)  
I don't want it.

BEATRICE opens the box and takes out the emerald pendant.

BEATRICE

(mimicking RYAN'S somber tone)  
'The heir to the fortune must wear the Mayfair pendant

an

her wedding day.'  
(deadpan)  
We should all have to suffer such burdens.

ROWAN

Then you wear it.

BEATRICE

C'mon now - give a little nod to Mayfair tradition.

And she fastens it round ROWAN'S neck. The jewel gleams. ROWAN scowls at herself in the mirror... KNOCK-KNOCK. BEATRICE turns to the door with a frown.

BEATRICE

Nobody's supposed to see the -

AARON (OC)

May I - come in...?

AARON opens the door and steps inside. His smile blooms.

AARON

The most beautiful Mayfair of all. (pause) They're almost ready.

BEATRICE turns to ROWAN - and her eyes well up.

BEATRICE

God bless this day, darling.

She gives ROWAN a hug and leaves. AARON takes ROWAN'S hands in his.

AARON

Thank you for this honor, my dear.

ROWAN

(a warm smile)

You've been shadowing the family for thirty years.

It's only fitting

you give one of us away.

AARON

I've grown very fond of you and Michael both.

Her smile broadens - and her cheeks redden.

AARON

Ah, the perfect touch. A blushing bride.

And she kisses him on the cheek.

EXT. THE MAYFAIR GARDEN. LATER THAT MORNING

It has been done up to extravagant perfection. The guests are seated - RYAN, GIFFORD and dozens of others. MICHAEL and ROWAN stand before a MINISTER. STU, and BEATRICE are just off to the side. A STRING QUARTET is beneath a banana tree. A ring glistens on ROWAN's finger. she slides a ring on MICHAEL'S finger.

ROWAN

I do.

MINISTER

Then - in the eyes of God and his creations, you are husband and wife.

The lovers embrace in a kiss. The MUSIC starts. ROWAN hurls a bouquet - then whirls to MICHAEL and embraces him...so neither see the WIND catch the flowers - and take them far up into the sky...

EXT. THE MAYFAIR GROUNDS - LATE MORNING

A gaggle of Mayfairs in their party best. Kids dart between grownups' legs. Backs are slapped. Glasses are drained.

ANOTHER CORNER OF THE PORCH

AARON listens as GIFFORD - drunk - rumbles on between gulps of bourbon. The cat sits in his lap. MICHAEL and ROWAN stand off to the side, listening.

GIFFORD

right..? Well,  
Yup. A witch.

Turn over a rich southern family and you find wackos -  
with the Mayfairs, more than one wanted to be a witch.

A hand smacks the back of GIFFORD'S head. It's BEATRICE

BEATRICE  
You babbling that nonsense - now...? This is a wedding.

GIFFORD  
I'm not saying I believe it...but I heard it 'nough  
times to know somebody  
Y'know - "make us rich"  
some stuff about  
did. (chuckles) They made a deal with the devil.  
- worship the number thirteen - the whole bit. And  
'bringing them all back through a door...'

BEATRICE  
Gifford Mayfair - I'll cook your tongue on a spit!  
(pause) witches!

GIFFORD  
Hell - Julien believed it... Carlotta too... and god  
knows, more than a  
few of us called her a witch!

LAUGHTER from the CROWD. ARRON glances at ROWAN and MICHAEL - who listen  
silent and  
expressionless.

GIFFORD  
Ever taken a good look at the portraits...?

GIFFORD rises with the cat - and they all follow him inside.

INT. THE MAYFAIR MANSION - THE MAIN HALL. MOMENTS LATER

GIFFORD, cat in his arms, has led the group to the portraits.

GIFFORD  
See that...?

In each portrait, a Mayfair stands an the foreground and in the background -  
at each painting  
- sometimes clear, sometimes partially hidden - is a keyhole-shaped door.

GIFFORD  
Every one of 'em - in front of one of those doors.  
See...?  
They believed it!

The cat suddenly HISSES and dives out of GIFFORD'S arms.

ROWAN  
eyes the paintings - and takes MICHAEL'S hand in hers.

GIFFORD

(raises his glass)

A toast to Rowan and Michael. May they always drink of love and always love to drink!

And he drinks as LAUGHTER fills the hall.

INT. THE MANSION - THE SECOND FLOOR HALL. LATER

GIFFORD walks drunkenly down the empty hall.

FROM BEHIND HIM - A TRACKING SHOT

zooms up and past him - BZZZZZ-KPIT... And he walks into

DIEDRE'S ROOM

New studs and sheetrock are up- The cat wanders in.

GIFFORD

(strolls, bourbon-mellowed)

Ahh, Deedee. Fewer and fewer of us left now, hmm...?

(pause) what

happens to the stories when we're all gone...?

Then - he grins - bends down - and rises with the gold saw.

GIFFORD

Two hundred bucks for a saw...

He angles the saw so he can see his reflection... And in the gleaming gold surface, he sees A

HELLISH FACE OF SKULL AND BLOODIED FLESH. His face.

EXT. THE MAYFAIR MANSION. LATER THAT AFTERNOON

As the guests go home, ROWAN and ARRON lean on the porch railing, watching MICHAEL on the sidewalk, putting STU in a cab. A long beat. Then, ROWAN grins faintly to herself...

ROWAN

Yes - I do trust you.

ARRON

Your powers are growing. Rowan. I wasn't even that focused.

She looks at him. Their eyes lock. Her face sobers at what she senses.

ROWAN

I have seen him again. Last night.

AARON

But you've not told Michael.

She shakes her head NO. MICHAEL comes out the door-

BEATRICE  
Gifford...?! (pause) You seen my big-mouthed drunk  
of a brother...?  
fire hydrants.  
(shrugs) Probably stumbling home, positioning the  
(hugs ROWAN tightly)  
Safe trip, darling. And don't forget to put on the 'Do  
Not Disturb' sign.  
She grins at AARON - and heads down the walk.

AARON  
Lasher will act, Rowan. Whatever it is he wants - he's  
waited three  
I don't like -  
hundred years to have it. (pause) facing him alone...

ROWAN  
(adamant)  
Lasher is my legacy - not Michael's. (pause) Aaron,  
I've seen the  
He's not to  
pain in Michael. I can't bear to see anymore. (Pause)  
know. Swear to me.

AARON stares back. - and finally nods. they watch MICHAEL walk along the  
outside of the  
wrought-iron fence to the gate, RAT-TA-TAT-TATING with a stick.

ROWAN  
Aaron - I really could protect him - if...it I had to.  
Watching MICHAEL, AARON reaches out and takes her hand.

EXT. BAYOU COUNTRY. LATER THAT AFTERNOON

A small highway- The late sun filters through the thick, mossy trees on  
either side. Water  
shimmers in the BG. A Mercedes coupe zooms INTO FAME! and speeds away.

INSIDE THE CAR  
ROWAN is at the wheel, with MICHAEL beside her.

MICHAEL  
(starts singing. softly)  
I'm going back someday, come what may - to Blue Bayou.  
where the -

ROWAN  
(growls out Creedence Clearwater)  
'My pappy said 'Girl. don't let the man git ya - and do  
what he  
done to me - caus. he'll git ya!  
(drums the wheel)  
Born on a bayou, Bhorn on a byyyyyy-yooooo!'

MICHAEL leans back and appraises her. Gives her an I'm impressed nod. And she turns - and gives him a wink.

INT. THE NEWLYWEDS' HOTEL ROOM. THAT NIGHT  
MICHAEL, in silk pajama slacks, and his gloves, sits on the edge of the bed - ROWAN stands before him in a sheer robe. Cool, seductive. She unties the robe's sash, and it slips to the floor. The moonlight washes over her body.

ROWAN  
(soft. but almost a command)  
I'm yours now - completely... I want your touch.  
(pause) Try,  
Michael. Don't let anything else in.

Her face shines with passion and power. She peels his gloves off - places his hands on her - and buries his face against her. He hesitates, then starts exploring her with his hands.

She pushes him back onto the bed. A slow, sexual ballet begins - and escalates. She straddles him - and mounts him. Gazing down at him, she slides into a slow, thick rhythm. Her eyes close. A MOAN slips from her.

ROWAN  
Yes, Michael. Harder--.  
(MICHAEL shifts into a faster gear)  
More...

LASHER (UNSEEN)  
Like this...?

She stiffens - her eyes pop open.  
LASHER - spectral, his nakedness flickering - appears, wrapped round her from behind. His face against her flushed cheek - his body moving. getting her back into her myths

LASHER  
I am with you, my love. Like no other can ever be.

ROWAN  
(between passion and fear)  
Nooo... NO! Stop!

MICHAEL pounds at her harder, hearing only passion in her voice: No for YES, STOP for DON'T STOP. He can't see LASHER

ROWAN  
(going through the roof)  
God, no! Oh god....

LASHER strokes her roughly - perfectly...

LASHER

Like no other...

MICHAEL

Jesus...

ROWAN

STOP!

LASHER

Always loved you..

The bodies move like a fierce machine. ROWAN'S climax takes her to speechlessness... She collapses onto MICHAEL. The lovers lie still and silent. LASHER is gone.

INT. THE HOTEL ROOM. THE NEXT MORNING

MICHAEL and ROWAN in bed, asleep. He wakes with a sleepy smile and reaches out to her... she wakes with a jolt -

MICHAEL

Hi. I'm Michael curry. your husband...?

ROWAN focuses on him - getting her bearings... His hand slides under the covers to her body. She stops him.

ROWAN

(almost hard)

No. (softens...) Not - not now.

She pulls the covers up over her. His grin shows.

MICHAEL

When you get married, I thought the sex stopped after the honeymoon...

She rolls away from him. He shrugs - and gets out of bed.

ROWAN

opens an eye, listening to him leave. she closes her eyes...

EXT. THE NEWLYWEDS' BAYOU COTTAGE PATIO. DAY

ROWAN lies in a lounge chaise, eyes closed. She looks under the weather. MICHAEL sits next to her, sketching - his eyes dart from his pad to ROWAN. Deft. quick strokes-

MICHAEL

You look a little green.

ROWAN

(eyes closed. flat)

Mm-hmmm...

MICHAEL

Maybe the shrimp you had last night.

ROWAN

Mm-hmm...

He grins. Sketching quickly now, finishing. He holds up it is a goofy caricature of ROWAN:  
gap-toothed, freckled, cross-eyed, with pigtails going out at angles.

MICHAEL

So - you like your portrait...?

ROWAN - eyes closed - gives the slightest of nods. MICHAEL smiles mischievously.

MICHAEL

Gee - look at that. I didn't know alligators came this far up on shore

ROWAN

Mm-hmm...

Suddenly - her eyes pop open. She shoots up -

ROWAN

Alligator...?

MICHAEL grins - lies back down - and closes his eyes.

EXT. A BAYOU GAS STATION IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE. NIGHT

The pumps - old with faded paint. The 'office' - a weathered shack. on the porch, an OLD MAN sits in the shadows with an accordion, playing an eerie tune. A funky pick-up truck is parked off to the side. The Mercedes pulls in at the pumps.

INSIDE THE CAR

MICHAEL and ROWAN wait for service. He honks the horn.

MICHAEL

Everybody must be out back sacrificing a virgin to the crocodile god.

He gets out and walks toward the OLD MAN with the accordion, who sits with his back to the car.

MICHAEL

Excuse me..

(taps the OLD MAN on the shoulder)  
I'm trying to find -

The OLD MAN turns round - half his face is a mass of ancient scars -. thick and deep - winding all the way down his neck. MICHAEL reflexively rears back stunned. the OLD MAN smiles.

OLD MAN  
Jesus stopped here once - for directions.

And out of the office comes an ATTENDANT - 50, greasy overalls, a friendly grin.

ATTENDANT  
Gator got him nice, huh mister...?

MICHAEL stares at the OLD MAN. And then - the ATTENANT sees the Mercedes. His eyes widen.

ATTENDANT  
Jesus St. Cracker! Look at that beauty!

He walks to the car, circling it, admiring it. He smiles in at ROWAN. Two MEN - 30's, jeans and t-shirts - come out of the office, and stand, arms folded, staring at the car. The ATTENDANT leans in a window, eyeing the car's interior.

MICHAEL  
We on the right road to the Cajun Kitchen...?

The two MEN get into the pick-up truck and drive off.

ATTENDANT  
See ya later. boys (to MICHAEL) Y'know, I buy American - every time. Hell, it's the right thing to do but nobody ever built a car like them Nazis. (pause) keep going two miles Kitchen's on the left.

MICHAEL gets in the car. Turns the ignition - and stares over at the OLD MAN, sitting motionless. The ATTENDANT pats the car - and the Mercedes pulls away. The OLD MAN starts playtng the slow, soft tune again.

EXT. A SMALL DARK ROAD. MINUTES LATER

The Mercedes cruises. Mossy trees shimmer in the headlights.

INSIDE THE CAR

ROWAN  
(grins. a southern twang)  
Nobody makes a car like them Nasis...

MICHAEL  
(grins. turns to her)

Did you see the old man on the ---

ROWAN

(straightening up. eye. widening)

Michael!

MICHAEL locks back to the road. The pick-up truck is stopptd in the middle of the road.

MICHAEL jams on the brakes and skids to a stop. Then - from outside the window - CLICK.

MICHAEL turns - and stares down the barrel of a shotgun held in the hands of grinning MAN # 1.

MAN # 1

You two lovebirds wanna step outside...?

MAN # 2 appears at ROWAN'S door - and opens it for her. ROWAN and MICHAEL exchange looks - and step out onto the road, on opposite sides of the car.

MAN # 2

I'll bet somebody owns a car like that carries a let o' cash.

MAN # 1

Yup. Lots.

MICHAEL

(simmering. deadpan)

That's smart thinking. Tell me - which one of you got to use the brain tonight...?

MAN # 1's grin evaporates. He shoves MICHAEL with the gun.

MAN # 1

Give me your wallet, asshole!

MICHAEL glares at him.

ROWAN

Michael - give him the money!

MICHAEL digs out his wallet and hands it to MAN # 1.

MAN # 1

Now wasn't that easy... ? You should try harder at being a help, Michael.

MAN # 2

That's probably what she, says - "Try harder, Michael."  
Right.

Sammy.

MAN # 1

(a lewd chuckle)

Yeah. "Harder. Michael. Harder."

His words make ROWAN'S eyes widen. MAN # 2 runs his hand across ROWAN'S cheek. She stiffens.  
He hooks his arm round her neck, drawing her face to him roughly.

MAN # 2  
That what you tell him, hon...?

MICHAEL  
Get your goddamn hands -

MAN # 1 slams MICHAEL against the car. MAN # 2 locks ROWAN in a grubby kiss. She is solid stone. Her eyes focused on MAN # 2 like a gunsight. Suddenly - he breaks off the kiss - and releases her. Staring at her weirdly.

MAN # 1  
(laughs)  
Shit, Rollie - she give you a shock...?

MAN # 2 steps back from ROWAN, his face twisting up. wincing. Something is happening...  
ROWAN glares at him like a beacon.

MAN # 1  
(his smile fades)  
Rollie. . .? Hey, man...

MAN # 2 goes down on one knee, hands going to his head. MAN # 1 comes over to him - his alarm growing-.

MAN # 1  
Hey - what's with you, man...?

MAN # 2 groans and falls to the ground. writhing in the glare of the car's headlights, a trickle of blood at his nose. MAN # 1 whirls on ROWAN with the shotgun.

MAN # 1  
What the fuck's going on...?! what'd you do to him, lady...?!

MICHAEL leaps to the hood - takes MAN # 1 down with a flying tackle - grabs the shotgun and knocks him cold with the butt. He whirls to ROWAN -

MICHAEL  
Get in the car!!  
(ROWAN is entranced)  
Rowan!!!

She's in another world. He shoves her inside - dives in his side - screeches into reverse, does a 180 and speeds away.

INSIDE THE CAR

MICHAEL - freaked - driving like a bat out of hell. ROWAN slumps in her seat, slowly coming back.

MICHAEL

(revving. blown away)

Jesus fucking Christ!!! That was you, wasn't it...?!

ROWAN!

(she is silent. hazy)

But it wasn't like Graham - or Carlotta not blind fury.

This time

you controlled it, didn't you...?!!! Didn't you...?!

ROWAN...?!!

Goddamnit, ANSWER ME!!!

She slowly turns to him - her face white and haggard.

ROWAN

(flat. faraway)

Yes.

He stares at her - silent in the face of her power.

EXT. THE MAYFAIR MANSION. LATE NIGHT

The Mercedes pulls up and parks. MICHAEL gets out, dishevelled, scraped up. ROWAN gets out her side. They stand there. Staring at the house. A long beat. She's reading his mind.

ROWAN

No - I didn't kill him. (pause) Would you rather I'd

let

them kill us - after they'd raped me...?

MICHAEL

(softly)

No. (pause) This is unreal...

ROWAN

It's not some fairytale in an old book. (pause)

Michael -

look at me.

(he looks at her mutely)

I didn't choose this, Michael. This is who I am.

(deeply. poignantly)

I love you.

MICHAEL

I love you too.

A long beat. They walk to the dark house and enter. A light comes on. STU comes sleepily down the stairs.

STU

What are you doing here...?

They walk past him - silent exhausted - and step into their room and close the door.

INT. THE OPERATING ROOM IN ROWAN'S DREAM

ROWAN works feverishly on an OUT OF FRAME patient. The masked FIGURES watching silently.

ROWAN throws her hands up in despair, her confidence failing.

ROWAN

I - I can't do it!

The others urge her on - imploring. encouraging her.

ROWAN

(pointing OUT OF FRAME. frantic)

But look! LOOK! How can I do it...?

OC - a muffled CRY. TILT DOWN slowly - the operating table comes INTO FRAME - and lying on it, A TINY HAND... PULL OUT slowly to REVEAL more of the body on the table the tiny hand and an arm joined to a ---

ROWAN SUDDENLY WAKES IN BED BESIDE MICHAEL she tosses the sheets back - and stumbles into the BATHROOM. She closes the door, kneels at the toilet --- and vomits.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP TO

EXT. THE MAYFAIR GROUNDS. A WEEK LATER - DUSK

Autumn is browning the foliage. The mansion renovation shows great progress. The rain pours down.

INT. THE MAYFAIR MANSION - THE LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Rain streams down the windows. ROWAN sits reading as MICHAEL kneels at the fireplace in a sweater. muttering, striking matches, trying in vain to start a fire.

MICHAEL

Fall in New Orleans... This whole town is waterlogged!  
The matches,  
the wood, my clothes, my skin.

ROWAN

That's cause we're below sea level.

MICHAEL

(crabby)  
ROWAN we're below sea level. I've spent time there  
myself.

ROWAN  
That's not funny.

He sighs - walks to the window and stares out at the rain, his back to the room.

MICHAEL  
(sings - half to himself)  
'I left my heart in Ran Sanfisco...

ROWAN glances at the fireplace - with an almost mischievous look. She focuses on the logs - her gaze narrows - as if she is trying to see something that isn't there. She's going inside herself, summoning up something... And -

A FLAME  
suddenly flicks out from the logs.

ROWAN  
intensities her stare and --- the logs bursts into flame. She grins to herself - and buries her nose in her book.

MICHAEL  
Ro, what do you think about - about spending  
Thanksgiving back  
in -

Turning now, he stops - seeing the blaze. Huh...? He does a slow turn to ROWAN - eyeing her suspiciously.

MICHAEL  
You did that, didn't you...?

ROWAN  
(looks up innocently)  
Talking to me dear...?

He shrugs - and walks before the fire staring into it. ROWAN watches him.

MICHAEL  
Remember the first time we made love - and then ---

ROWAN  
(smiles)  
- we made a fire.

A beat. Suddenly her smile drops. She's read his thoughts.

ROWAN  
(firm. almost defensive)

That's not true.

MICHAEL whirls round to her, his back to the fire.

MICHAEL  
Stop doing that! If I've something to say, let me say  
it - out  
loud.

ROWAN gives hi: a chastened nod. A beat.

MICHAEL  
How can you say it isn't true...? We're not the same.  
Not like we  
used to be. (sighs) You're changing - all the time..  
She rises - walks to him - and takes his face in her hands.

ROWAN  
Michael - what made you fall in love with me...?

MICHAEL  
(a beat. straightfaced)  
Your beneficence.

ROWAN  
(grins)  
I'm serious. (in earnest) Whatever it was - it's  
still there  
inside me, isn't it - change and all...?

MICHAEL hesitates - and nods. He slowly grins.

MICHAEL  
Just do me a favor. Don't start anymore fires - or  
turn on the  
lights by blinking - or cook with your hands behind  
your -

And suddenly -

the blaze silently erupts from the fireplace - becoming a demonic, fiery  
virision of LASHER - a  
mass of jagged, leaping flames - and hovers over them, unseen by MICHAEL.  
ROWAN'S eyes bulge  
- and she wraps her arm. tightly - glaring furiously at the flaming specter.  
LASHER dissolves  
into a thousand flames - and disappears. MICHAEL separates himself fram her -  
startled.

MICHAEL  
What the hell are you -

And she pulls him back to her - and holds him tight.

ROWAN  
(shaking with emotion)

I love you more than anything in the world, Michael.  
(glances at the room)  
More than anything.

EXT. THE MAYFAIR MANSION. DAY - A WEEK LATER  
MICHAEL AND STU are high up on ladders fitting and hammering copper flashing  
along the eaves.  
They don't see ROWAN come through the gate and up the walk.

MICHAEL  
(singing)  
'There is a house in xew Orleans...'

BZZZZZ...

MICHAEL & STU  
'...they call the Rising Sun...'

ROWAN  
I thought it was 'whistle while you work.

STU  
(looks down)  
Is that a crack about our singing...?

ROWAN  
Is that what you were doing...?

MICHAEL grins - and goes back to hammering. WHACK! WHACK!

ROWAN  
(brimming with excitement)  
Michael, I spoke to the geneticist from Stanford, and  
she -

And - a rung of MICHAEL'S ladder cracks. He falls grabbing at air --- and  
finally grabs on to  
a rung hanging suspended --- twisting. Nobody breathes and he finally gets  
his footing.

MICHAEL  
Goddamn sonuvabitch!

Sighs of relief all around. He climbs down. BZZZZZ...

ROWAN  
You alright...?

MICHAEL  
A little sore. Darm... (to STU) Finish up my section,  
will ya...?

STU nods - and leans to the spot where Michael was working.

MICHAEL  
(to ROWAN)

You were saying...?

ABOVE THEM - STU POUNDS THE FLASHING

WHACK! something drops free from beneath the eaves - grey, round - like a huge melon with ridges - landing in front of him on the gutter. BZZZZZZZ... Two, black antennae wiggle out of a crack in the sphere...

STU

(softly - with realization)

Oh shit...

The sphere splits open - and dozens and dozens of WASPS swarm out - a black cloud enveloping him... He screams - topples from the ladder - and lands with THUD. ROWAN and MICHAEL rush to him. STU lies motionless...

INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM. EVENING - TWO HOURS LATER

ROWAN and MICHAEL sit at STU'S bedside. STU sleeps - his arm in a cast - his face and hands swollen beyond recognition. MICHAEL shakes his head sadly, steeped in grief.

MICHAEL

Is he - is he gonna die...?

ROWAN

(her eyes locked on STU)

Lock the door.

(MICHAEL looks at her - confused)

Lock it

He rises and locks the door. Then turns and watches, silent.

ROWAN is still. Her eyes narrow into slits of concentration. The air seems to shimmer around her. She leans to STU - to his grotesque swollen lips. She closes her eyes - and kisses him... STU'S deformed face shimmers - the angry flesh lightens... and slowly, it shrinks back to his normal visage.

ROWAN' opens her eyes - and slowly turns to MICHAEL, who stands flattened against the wall, speechless, amazed. She turns back to STU, grasps his disfigured hand, brings his fingers to her lips - and kisses them., one by one...

INT. THE MANSION - A FIRST FLOOR ROOM. LATER THAT NIGHT

The room is unfinished. There is a bed and a dresser. MICHAEL sits on the bed, staring at the floor. ROWAN - in a robe - sits beside him.

ROWAN

It was an accident.

(MICHAEL raises a skeptical eyebrow)

Michael - there isn't a house in New Orleans this old  
that doesn't  
have a wasp's nest somewhere.

He stares at her - unconvinced. She tries for logical -

ROWAN

Michael - why would he want to hurt Stu...?

MICHAEL

I don't know.

He lies back and turns off the light. DARKNESS. She lies beside him, reaches out and finds his hand. A long beat.

MICHAEL

You changed him, Rowan. You went right down to each  
cell - and  
changed him.

They lie there silently.

INT. THE BEDROOM. LATER THAT NIGHT

MICHAEL sleeps. ROWAN lies beside him, staring out the window. A BREEZE whistles. she rises and walks out of the room - down the hallway - out the front door and down into

THE GARDEN

She stares at the sky. There is a bright moon, but no stars.

ROWAN

'A moon, but no stars...'

The trees and bushes sway in the BREEZE.

ROWAN

The wasps were meant for Michael - but there's only so  
much you  
can control, isn't there? The great and powerful  
lasher - undone by  
a faulty ladder-..

(SILENCE)

Why would you hurt him...?! Answer me.

LASHER (UNSEEN)

I love you, Rowan. I've always loved you.

(ROWAN whirls around)

I only wanted to be in your thoughts. To bring myself  
into your  
thoughts - so I could be as we are now.

ROWAN

YOU VIOLATED ME!!! ON MY WEDDING NIGHT!

LASHER (UNSEEN)  
(curious. sincere)  
Explain this to me --- violated...?

ROWAN  
You bastard...

The BREEZE blows stronger. A huge flower drops at her feet.

LASHER (UNSEEN)  
I made it for you.

ROWAN bends and picks up the bizarre flower- Intrigued.

ROWAN  
Made it...?

LASHER (UNSEEN)  
It is from love.

ROWAN  
To love, you must be able to feel.

LASHER (UNSEEN)  
If you knew how I yearn for that...

And --- there in the moonlight, LASHER materializes. Shimmering.  
Transparent. Spectral.  
Beautiful. Melancholy.

LASHER  
If I could feel like you feel...but I have only others'  
feelings - . . . like  
-- but not nine  
breeres that blow through me. Things to be felt, yes -  
to feel...

ROWAN  
(to be reckoned with)  
It you harm Michael, I will let my anger loose. And  
you will feel that.  
Do you understand...?

LASHER  
(chastened. softly)  
Yes.  
(a long beat)  
My love is as strong as Michael's. How is it there is  
love in you for  
one - and not for another...?

She is stunned by the depth of his question. He smiles.

ROWAN

You're very clever, aren't you...?

LASHER

I am only what you are --- what all of you have been.

(pause) what

do you think of yourself now, my love...?

She stares at the flower. Feeling its texture. Smelling it.

ROWAN

How much of it is me - alone and how much is you...?

(LASHER flickers...)

Lasher --- what do you want...?

And he DISSOLVES nothing. She looks at the flower. It starts to shrivel - and disintegrates in her fingers.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. THE MAYFAIR MANSION. WEEKS LATER - DAY

The house is closer to renovation's end than the beginning.

INT. THE MAYFAIR MANSION - DIEDRE'S ROOM. SAME TIME

The room is almost done. MICHAEL stands at the empty window frames. gloveless, with a sketch pad. BZZZ-KPIT... he cocks his head - and looks over at the toy chest. He walks to the chest, opens it. and takes out the marionette. It dangles from his hand, twirling slowly.

MICHAEL eyes it closely - his face suddenly creasing --- The marionette looks like MICHAEL - it's dressed like him and it is wearing gloves.

LASHER'S VOICE!

I love the room, Michael.

And - the marionette starts to grow... MICHAEL drops it in terror - it keeps growing - till it is life-size, it's body clattering as it jerks about like a huge, wooden puppet-version of MICHAEL.

THE MARIONETTE

Michael - you've forgotten your gloves. Better off with them on,

don't you think...? (pause) Here...

And with a monstrous LAUGH, the MARIONETTE pulls off a glove - and his hand comes with it. Blood spurts from the wrist... The other glove flies off, with the same result.

MICHAEL stumbles back, flailing at the muck. The MARIONETTE clatters to the floor in a zillion sparks of dust. The disembodied, gloved hands lie twitching. And -

they mutate. Bubbling, turning scabrous. Claws sprout from the fingers. They become monstrous crabs with human eyes scuttling along the floor toward MICHAEL... At his feet now - climbing up his legs - up his chest MICHAEL swats them to the floor - and stomps on them, again and again and again. turning them to pulp...

ROWAN (CC)  
What're you drawing...?

MICHAEL IS STANDING FROZEN AT THE WINDOW pad and pencil still in his hand. ROWAN comes INTO FRAME. He turns - in the ozone. She looks at the pad. He has sketched the marionette, dangling from a disembodied hand.

ROWAN  
That's really good.  
(a beat. she sighs)  
I have to go meet Bea for lunch now.  
(MICHAEL is frozen)  
I feel so bad for her- There's still no word on  
Gifford-  
she's a wreck.

MICHAEL  
(soft. fuzzy)  
Give her my best.

Rowan' cocks her head at him - leans and gives a quick kiss and leaves. He looks down at the sketch and stares silently.

EXT. THE FRENCH MARKET. AFTERNOON

An outdoor bazaar. An old BLACK MAN, cataracts fogging his eyes, plays guitar while a BLACK BOY tap-dances beside him.

ROWAN AND BEATRICE SIT IN AN OPEN PATIO CAFE  
BEATRICE has a beer and a huge plate of oysters. Chewing, she points at the plate. ROWAN shakes her head NO.

ROWAN  
That food poisoning did a job on me.

BEATRICE  
I told you not to honeymoon in the Bayou. (pause) I  
remember when  
Giff ate a bad batch of ---

Her eyes fill with tears. ROWAN reaches for her hand.

ROWAN

I'm sure he's alright, Bea. They'll find him somewhere.

BEATRICE

It's over a month. (sighs) The police say it happens all the time.

She musters a weak smile. Her eyes shift to the crowd.

BEATRICE

Isn't that your friend...?

ROWAN turns to see AARON - watching the guitarist and dancer.

ROWAN

Aaron!

He turns - blooms in a smile - strolls over - and bows.

AARON

The Ladies Mayfair. Good afternoon.

He leans to ROWAN - and they kiss. Me turns to BEATRICES and kisses her hand. He sits down - and looks ROWAN over.

AARON

Are you alright...? You look pale.

ROWAN

(good-naturedly)

I'm the doctor. I wish everyone would stop commenting on my health.

But AARON is suddenly very focused, concentrated. Staring at her. And finally - he smiles.

AARON

There are two.

ROWAN

Two what...?

AARON

Two heartbeats.

BEATRICE

Excuse me...?

AARON

(points at ROWAN'S stomach)

There.

ROWAN looks down at herself. Her eyes widen in realization.

ROWAN

Are you sure...?

AARON nods calmly. BEATRICE looks from one to the other.

BEATRICE

What are you two talking about...?

AARON

(his smile widens)

Rowan - is pregnant.

ROWAN looks up at him and beams. BEATRICE is stunned.

BEATRICE

But how could - how can you possibly --- ?

And she sits back - and stares at them.

INT. THE MAYFAIR GARDEN. LATER THAT DAY - DUSK

CLOSE-UP - A BUSH WITH LARGE EMERALD-GREEN FLOWERS has bloomed. Extraordinary, exotic, bizarre. OC - joyful LAUGHTER. PAN TO

MICHAEL

whirling ROWAN round in his arms. Both of them grinning and laughing. And he smothers her with a deep kiss..

INT. THE MANSION PORCH. NIGHT

MICHAEL and ROWAN sit side by side, rocking in their chairs, holding hands, staring at the garden.

MICHAEL

If it's a boy --- Taylor.

ROWAN

A bit much. (Pause) Lucas.

MICHAEL

Nah - I had a shmuck of an uncle named Lucas. (thinks) Grayson.

ROWAN

(makes a tace)

Where are you gitting these...?

(thinking. her face lights)

Aaron --- if it's a boy.

He grins - and nods. They lean to each other and kiss.

MICHAEL

And if it's a girl --- Diedre.

She blooms in a painful smile. A tear runs down her cheek.

EXT. THE CEMETERY. THE NEXT DAY - DUSK

Deserted. ROWAN, with a bouquet of tulips, walks past shadowed crypts and stops before the huge Mayfair crypts the vault marked DIEDRE MAYFAIR - 1943- 1992. The vault's ledge is festooned with flowers. A long beat.

ROWAN  
(a sad smile. softly)  
I'm going to have a baby. (pause) Michael wants to name it after you - if it's a girl. Diedre Mayfair Curry. Pretty, huh...?  
(pause) Funny --- I never really thought I'd ever ---

LASHER (OC)  
I bring her flowers too.

ROWAN whirls round. LASHER sits crosslegged on a crypt. She glances from side to side.

LASHER  
There is no one here but the dead.

ROWAN  
Go away! I don't want you here.

LASHER  
If that were true, I would not be here.

ROWAN  
It's very dangerous to assume you know what a woman wants.

LASHER  
From the night on the moor, when I was swept into the world and first knew this exquisite pain - it is a Mayfair who has wanted me! Suzann. and Deborah. Stella - Marguerite - Antha - Diedre - All of them.

(a beat. his melancholy smile)  
And you will have a child...

She glares at him --- and slowly nods.

LASHER  
A girl...?

ROWAN  
(eyes him. a beat. very cod)  
It's too soon to know.

She turns her back on him and puts her bouquet on the vault's ledge. She doesn't move. LASHER suddenly looks confused.

LASHER  
You fear me. Why when you yearn so to know me...?  
(pause) You want more from me than the pleasure. Much more.

He glides to her. His spectral face right before hers.

LASHER  
you crave what I might show you. What you can learn.  
What I can give you.  
(a beat)  
So much more than Michael can.

ROWAN  
(a powerful smile of strength)  
What Michael gives me is stronger than anything you  
could ever understand.

LASHER  
(pained. touching)  
But I could understand. I want to understand!

ROWAN  
I LOVE him!

LASHER  
(shimmering. angered)  
Do not tell me that!

ROWAN  
I LOVE MICHAEL. MICHAEL!!

LASHER flickers furiously --- and disappears. ROWAN scans the cemetery...

ROWAN  
Lasher...? Lasher...?

SCRRUNNCH... She turns. The marble lid or a crypt is slowly sliding off... and clatters to the ground. Then, the lid of a coffin comes INTO VIEW as it opens. And - a discolored skeleton rises up and climbs out - and walks toward ROWAN. She watches wide-eyed holding her fear in check. The skeleton stops before her - raises its arm and bony fingers gently caress ROWAN whitened cheek...

LASHER'S VOICE (WITHIN THE SKELETON)  
(tender - but menacing)  
Michael will look like this one day... (pause)... but not I.

ROWAN'S face suddenly twists in anger. She grabs the skeleton by the ribcage - and slams it against the MAYFAIR crypt. It breaks into pieces and crumples to the ground.

INT. THE MAYFAIR MANSION LIVING SLOOM

Almost finished. A magnificent design. MICHAEL, AARON and STU lift champagne glasses for a toast.

MICHAEL

To the next Mayfair: Diedre - or --- Aaron.

AARON'S face creases in affection. Stunned. Deeply moved. They drink. STU examines the empty champagne bottle-

STU

Anymore of this...?

MICHAEL nods - and heads out the room.

STU

(calling after him. casual)

I - uh - I assume either one's middle name is gonna be Stu...

MICHAEL WALKS DOWN THE HALLWAY PAST THE PORTRAITS. Passing the mirror, he stops - and cocks his head. The glass is turning GREEN. He raises a finger and touches the glass. His finger punctures the GREENNESS - and sinks in up to his knuckle. He hesitates - and slowly, draws his finger out..

THE GREENNESS POURS OUT into the hall. knocking him down. The hall is filling up, the GREENNESS rising. MICHAEL struggles as it rises above his head - above the portraits and the witches come out into the GREEN - surrounding him

DEBORAH

Michael... Do what you can.

SUZANNE

Michael... Help us... The door!

AARON (OC)

Michael... Michael... look at me!

MICHAEL IS ON THE FLOOR IN THE HALL  
AARON is kneeling, grasping him by the shoulders.

AARON

Focus, Michael

MICHAEL hones in on AARON - and points at the portraits.

MICHAEL

It was them.

AARON nods soberly - and helps him to his feet.

MICHAEL

Don't tell Rowan about this.

AARON

Michael, Rowan should -

MICHAEL

NO! she's pregnant, Aaron. she's got that to deal  
with - and the  
you think I know  
clinic.. she is not to hear about this. (pause) don't  
she spends half her lite worrying about me...  
(a beat. cools off)  
Listening to my heart, aren't you...?  
(AARON nods)  
The Timex still ticking...?

AARON gives a somber grin - and they walk down the hall.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP TO

INT. THE CLINIC. WEEK LATER - LATE NIGHT

Microscopes, centrifuges, test tube racks, cubicles and refrigerators fill a  
large, dark,  
deserted room. PAN TO

ROWAN AND LASHER STANDING AT A CORNER LAB TABLE

A single candle flickers. She holds a closed, long-stemted rose in her hand.  
LASHER'S  
transparent hand reaches out and melts into bars. ROWAN shivers from the  
union.

LASHER

(hypnotic)

Imagine The sun. (pause) It is morning. It rises. The  
light washes  
over you. It warms you.

ROWAN looks out the window. She's going far away. Outside the room. Past  
the dark night  
outside.

LASHER

Now, Rowan. Give me the sun.

She almost trembles with concentration. And then --- the rose opens - the  
petals spreading  
wide...

INT. ROWAN AND MICHAEL'S BEDROOM. SAME TIME

the WIND gusts outside the darkened windows. MICHAEL lies in bed, DAVID COPPERFIELD in his hands Tapping the book. Uneasy. Distracted. He glances at the nighttable clock - 12:45 and scowls. He opens the book to the first page.

MICHAEL

'It was the best of times. It was the worst of times...'

A bitter grin darkens his face. He rises and walks into the bathroom. He strips off his pajamas and turns on the shower.

INT. THE CLINIC LAB. SAME TIME

ROWAN holds the rose in one hand and lights it with a match. It ignites. She drops it on a counter and watches it burn - darkening and shriveling to a curled black ash.

LASHER (UNSEEN)

Now, my love --- see it as It was.

Her eyes never leave the burnt remains - but brighten in concentration. Deep, shining tunnels.

LASHER (UNSEEN)

See the memory of life!

Her body tingles with a remarkable force - and the blackened petals start to uncurl - and brighten to a pink - then a vibrant, rich red. Alive again. ROWAN shivers - her body goes limp and she smiles.

LASHER (UNSEEN)

(delighted)

You see...? You see...?!!

(a beat. softly)

Rowan think what the child might do...

INT. THE MANSION - THE BATHROOM. SAME TIME

MICHAEL - naked, freshly showered, his face lathered with shaving cream. The antique mirror on the wall is completely fogged from the hot, steamy running water in the sink He begins to rub the mirror clear... His eyes widen - as rub by rub, he reveals -

A monstrous tableau in the mirror: A deep, hellish landscape of nightmarish creatures - part-human, part-grotesque. - tortured. screaming silently. They turn and see him and start flying toward him at impossible speed...

MICHAEL squeezes his eyes shut.

MICHAEL

(like a litany)

I - AM - STANDING - IN - THE - BATHROOM!!!

He opens his eyes. The mirror reflects only his lathered face and the bathroom. A deep sigh.

A long beat. He picks up a razor - and starts at his cheekbone. As the razor descends, shaving the lather off -

there is nothing beneath the rather in tb. mirror. No cheek - just BLACKNESS. He stares in shock. Another stroke removes more lather, revealing more of the VOID. He is mesmerized - and can't stop- shaving faster until all the lather is gone - and the upper half of his face floats above a blackt hole in the mirror. And suddenly -

- the grotesqueries are trying to squeeze through the black hole with ear-splitting HOWLS - hands and arms and talons pulling and ripping at each other, fighting to be the first to escape...

MICHAEL grabs the mirror off the wall and hurls it to the floor, shattering it. SILENCE. He steadies himself, catching his breath. Then he hesitantly brings a hand up and feels his jaw, his cheeks and lip. A deep breath. He turns off the water - and walks out of the room.

EXT. THE MAYFAIR GROUNDS. THE FOLLOWING MORNING

Two WORKMEN are inside the dry, scrubbed swimming pool on ladders. applying a new coat of blue sealant to the sides.

MICHAEL AND STU ON THE SIDE PORCH

sipping coffee. MICHAEL has a distracted frown...

STU

...Donna's gonna meet me in Key West, so I'll leave here a week

before Christmas and be back on the fourth. Okay...?

MICHAEL gives a distracted nod. STU eyes him carefully

STU

What's wrong, Mike...?

MICHAEL shakes his head dismissively.

STU

asked Martha Rutledge C'mon - you haven't been able to lie to me since you  
out behind my back in tenth grade.

MICHAEL sighs deeply. Lips pursed. Wanting to speak.

MICHAEL  
I'm getting --- left behind.

STU  
Left behind...? This about Rowan...?

MICHAEL  
Yes. (pause) Partly. It's - it's -  
(a beat)  
Stu - do you believe in ---

STU'S eyes shift to something behind MICHAEL - his expression quizzical.  
MICHAEL cocks his  
head at STU - and turns...

ROWAN STANDS IN THE PORCH ENTRANCE BEHIND THEM  
Stock still. Pale. Drawn. She's been listening.

STU  
Hi there. Want coffee...?

ROWAN and MICHAEL'S eyes meet. Then --- OC - CRASH! ROWAN and MICHAEL'S eyes  
are locked.  
STU - turns to the sound.

ANGLE - THE SWIMMING POOL  
where a WORKER - up on a ladder - stares down, frowning at the can of sealant  
that has fallen.  
- its thick, blue-green contents spreading out on the bottom of the pool...

BACK TO THE PORCH

STU  
What now...?

He walks toward the pool, leaving ROWAN and MICHAEL alone.

MICHAEL  
(simmering anger)  
When did you get home last night...?

ROWAN  
What were you talking about...?

MICHAEL  
You look terrible. You're exhausted. You practically  
live at the goddamn  
clinic. (pause) Even pregnant women who aren't  
doctors know that You  
can't -

STU (OC)  
Mike! Better c'mere!

He stares at her - hurt, angry, baffled - and walks off.

EXT. DOWN IN THE POOL - MOMENTS LATER

MICHAEL, STU, and the WORKERS watch as the puddle of spilled blue sealant on the pool floor begins to shrink... Huh...?

MICHAEL  
It cracked the bottom. Stuff's seeping down through a crack.

Almost all the sealant is gone - revealing cracks where the can hit. MICHAEL taps the cracks with his foot - and STU grabs him as part of the pool caves in, leaving a hole.

MICHAEL lowers a ladder into the hole. It hits bottom.

STU  
Careful...

MICHAEL descends OUT OF VIEW. STU glances up and there is ROWAN - staring down at him, expressionless.

MICHAEL (OC)  
Somebody built a kind of room down here.

INT. BENEATH THE POOL. SAME TIME

MICHAEL stands in a dark, dank enclosure of ancient timbers - three foot square, six feet high. He turns - and trips over something.

BACK UP TOP AT THE HOLE IN THE POOL - MOMENTS LATER

MICHAEL (OC)  
Hey - gimme a hand!

MICHAEL appears, struggling with an old, slimy, wooden crate. STU grabs an end and slides it onto the pool.

INT. THE MANSION - A STORAGE ROOM. MINUTES LATER

ROWAN and MICHAEL - crowbar in hand - stand over the crate.

MICHAEL  
Dovetails. Gotta be a hundred years old.

ROWAN  
Go ahead.

He looks at her, searching her face.

MICHAEL

Something's wrong with you.

ROWAN

(flaring)

Nothing is wrong with me. I know something's in there

-

and so do you.

She grabs the crowbar - and pries the lid loose. She yanks the lid off - and they rear back. coughing, choking...

MICHAEL

Jesus Christ!

They slowly come back, leaning in for a look at the contents: A dozen, old, thick masan jars with air-tight wax seals.

ROWAN takes them out and sets them on the floor. They are filled with greenish, viscous fluid. It's hard to see inside - a 100 years of sediment has been stirred up. But things are settling in the jars. Things are becoming visible...

ROWAN

Michael --- look.

The jars are filled with HEADS - skulls covered with slimy flesh. Jellyish, rheumy eyes. Hair drifting like seaweed. ROWAN and MICHAEL stare. A long beat.

ROWAN

Marguerite...

MICHAEL looks at her - uncomprehending.

ROWAN

Marguerite! Carlotta said - "Margutrite was something of a practitioner herself." She meant - like a doctor --- Like ---

Suddenly - MICHAEL violently twists the top off a jar HISSSS... They both gag at the fumes...

ROWAN

Michael --- no!

He plunges his bare hand into the muck and pulls out a head. His fingers sink into the skin. A SEARING FLASH OF WHITE - INTO

INT. A ROOM IN THE MANSION [AS IF MICHAEL WERE THERE]

MARGUERITE and JULIEN stand over a MAN'S corpse, lying on a table. LASHER hovers expectantly.

MARGUERITE takes a crude surgical tool, servers the head, and holds it up by the hair. LASHER is brightening, swirling round and round the head...

MARGUERITE

Now, my love - Now!

LASHER dives into the head - like a vapor sucked inside. The lifeless eyes suddenly glimmer - and come to life

LASHER'S VOICE (FROM BEHIND THE EYES)

I am here, Marguerite! I can see!

But the eyes start to flicker and dim, like a dying light...

LASHER'S VOICE

(a plaintive cry)

No...NO pleeeeeease... I am going... slipping... The feeling... Oh, the feeling! NOOOO!

And now, there is only death in the eyes again.

BACK TO ROWAN AND MICHAEL

MICHAEL drops the head. It breaks like a rotten melon. He is horror-stricken, wiping his hands frantically on his shirt...

MICHAEL

He went into the dead! Saw with their eyes - used them...

ROWAN - terrified - reaches for him - but he pushes her away. Me grabs at the jars, inspecting them, one after another...

MICHAEL

This one!

Through the glass, a head stares out at him - its state far superior to the others: the hair brown and wavy, the face grotesquely beautiful. He opens the jar - and pulls it out. ANOTHER FLASH OF WHITE Inro

INT. DIEDRE'S ROOM [AS IF MICHAEL WERE THERE]

A naked MALE CORPSE lies on the brass bed - mottled, lifeless yet alive, pulsing with LASHER'S spirit MARGUERITE stands naked at the bedside. JULIEN stands beside her in elegant attire -

with a look of twisted fascination and anticipation.

The CORPSE beckons to MARGUERITE. She climbs on the bed and mounts it. The grey hands move with clumsy effort, pawing at her. She begins to move in a steady rhythm.

LASHER VOICE (WITHIN THE CORPSE)  
Marguerite. - I can feel you...

JULIEN  
(leaning in. face ablaze)  
Faster, Marguerite! Faster! FASTER!

MARGUERITE speeds up - but soon. the CORPSE'S hands slip to the bed, lifeless. Tears fill MARGUERITE'S eyes. JULIEN smashes the bedpost in anger and storms away.

BACK TO ROWAN AND MICHAEL  
MICHAEL still holds the skull, eye to eye.

MICHAEL  
Jesus - he tried to fuck her and Julien - Julien was there -  
like, like an overseer...

ROWAN suddenly grabs the head - and huris it to tbe floor. Glass and flesh and bone smash against the floorboards...

INT. THE TALMASCA GARDEN. LATER THAT DAY - DUSK

ROWAN and MICHAEL watch AARON as he paces - his face a study in concentration. He finally turns to MICHAEL.

AARON  
What have the witches always asked of you...?

MICHAEL  
"Go back, Michael. Do what you can..."

AARON  
Yes - and you have.  
(turns to ROWAN)  
Do you see...? He was passing over into death - but the witches sent him back - to the one person they knew had the power to save him... and they gave him the power to show you what no one else could...

He grabs MICHAEL by the wrists and raises them high.

AARON  
With his hands!

ROWAN

But why would they do that...?

AARON leans and smells a rose. Thinking. A long beat.

AARON

To warn you.

ROWAN'S face creases in confusion. AARON turns to MICHAEL -

AARON

You've always said you felt goodness in them - that the  
witches

brought you and Rowan together. Isn't that right...?

(MICHAEL nods emphatically)

They're reaching out to you, Rowan!

ROWAN

But it doesn't make sense. They - they used Lasher...  
they conspired  
with him.

AARON

Who can say the hope of redemption dies with our last  
breath...?

withered inside

and blood... surely

lead in Lashers

for the evil they

They must see what the legacy has wrought - Diedre,  
herself Carlotta, killing and stunting her own flesh  
they sense the child you carry - and the life it might  
grasp... (pause) Maybe, in death, they feel remorse  
embraced in life...?!

MICHAEL and ROWAN turn to each other. AARON is pacing again.

AARON

(excited)

It feels right. (pause) There is a continuum, Rowan.  
You're part  
of them.

(halts. a long beat)

They want you to stop Lasher.

The concept sends them all deep into SILENCE.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP TO

INT. ECU - ONE OF THE ANCIENT HEADS

floating in its jar. Calipers dip into the jar. PULL OUT to

ROWAN IN A WINDOWLESS ROOM AT THE RESEARCH CLINIC

as she extracts a chunk of flesh. She prepares a slide specimen, placing it under a large microscope. She deposits a specimen in a centrifuge and turns it on. WHIRRRR... she programs the computer - and columns of figures and symbols start filling the monitor. She eyes the Screen and - LASHER'S spectral face appears within the glass.

LASHER

And now - do you know...?

ROWAN'S face hardens. She stares back defiantly.

ROWAN

I know that you're evil.

LASHER

(poignant)

I only wanted to see as others do... feel as others

do... (sighs) ...but

Marguerite could not help me. Nor Julien...

ROWAN

And now you expect me to stockpile corpses for you...?!

LASHER

(his melancholy smile)

No, my love. I want nothing more of the dead.

(a long beat)

I want you to --- change me.

ROWAN falls silent - caught off-balance.

LASHER

I have kept this from you, until now. You had to learn the magnificence of your powers first. You had to see for yourself what you are capable of.

(a beat)

Think. Rowan - think of the rose - and the fire - and

Stu. (pause)

You gave Michael life again - you give life to the

child within you...

(a beat)

Give me life! Make me flesh!

She's stunned. He wafts out of the screen - floating round her like a sheath. She backs away from him. He follows...

ROWAN

It's impossible. You want me to - to make you into something you're

not! You - you have no substance - you have no cells,

no structure...

He circles round her. An unearthly courting dance. She is swaying, being swept up...

LASHER

I've waited for you - the one whose science could match her powers...

(sighs)

Do you know what it's like - to sense the majesty of something so sublime just beyond your reach...? to float in a dream that keeps a .promise half-hidden in its shadows.-.?

(a forlorn moan)

I did not choose to be such as this! Suzanne brought me here. She called to me!

ROWAN

But have I...? Ever...?!

LASHER is everywhere - all around her - caressing her...

LASHER

Not with your voice, no...but you do not need a voice for me.

Only the beat of your heart. That is your voice to me

---

She is up against the wall now, enveloped by him.

LASHER

--- and I have heard you from the beginning... from it's very first beat.

ROWAN

(swooning)

I love Michael...

LASHER

(seductive. tinged with menace)

Then help me--- for his sake...

His sexual perfection has her floating, eyes drooping. He kisses her deeply...

ROWAN

You mustn't hurt him. Mustn't - mustn't hurt..

LASHER

Focus all your powers on me, Rowan until it is done. Only me...

ROWAN

Only you...

LASHER

Change me, Rowan, and we can change everything...

Brightening, he fuses with her - two entities becoming one... And she surrenders to him...

INT. ROWAN'S LAB. HOURS LATER

ROWAN lies on the floor. Her eyes open. She rises groggily, and drops into her chair. Cocks her head, her senses keen.

ROWAN

Lasher...?

(SILENCE)

Lasher! Come to me!

SILENCE. She smiles cunningly - and nods, understanding.

ROWAN

(thinking out loud)

You can't. You use yourself up in the passion.

(pause)

You need time.

She starts rapidly typing at the computer. The screen shows -

hypothesis: to examine secondary growth activity  
cells induced by unknown catalyst -  
and resultingly, deduce nature of catalyst  
and it's reanimative authority

The computer shuttles. ROWAN types -

posit: if hypothesis is successful,  
what is probabiliy data will disclose  
specific procedure for destruction of catalyst?

The computers shuttles. Then, appearing on the screen -

75 %

She shows a faint smile of tritumph. She sits back - puts her hands on her round stomach - looks down and smiles warmly.

ROWAN

Maybe Aaron is right. Maybe they are trying to help.

Can you feel

them...?

(her face hardens with resolution)

I swear to you - you will never know him. When you

come into the

world, he will be gone. This is my promise to you.

She rises - flicks switches on some hi-tech machines, turns back to the keyboard - and types -  
begin hypothesis

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. THE MAYFAIR MANSION MORNING

The mansion is almost new. The trees are turning fall colors. Leaves are falling. PAN TO

THE GARDEN

where the emerald bush is blooming again - small, crimson buds sprouting from the center at the bright green flowers.

MICHAEL AND STU ON THE SIDEWALK

Standing beside a taxi. STU rubs his hands together.

STU

Oh, A few hours and I'll be wasting away in Margaritaville.  
sweet decadance.

MICHAEL

(very low-keyed)

Just don't fall off any ladders.

A long, silent look between them.

STU

(soothing)

- Mikey - pregnant women get crazy you know that. I mean  
hell, they're all crazy anyway - right...?

ROWAN

Comes running out the front door - down the walk to them. MICHAEL seems to pull inside himself.  
Cool. Aloof.

ROWAN

merry I almost missed you. You have a great time - and a  
Christmas.

She leans in and gives STU a big htag and a kiss.

STU

You too.

MICHAEL' S mood makes everything awkward. Everyone sneaking glances. STU finally wraps  
MICHAEL up in a hug.

STU

You two be good to each other.

And he gets into the taxi. ROWAN and MICHAEL watch silently till it goes OUT OF VIEW. ROWAN

turns round and stares at the house.

ROWAN

God, Michael - it's so beautiful. It'll be weird  
without anybody tromping  
around in there, huh...?

She turns to MICHAEL. He nods faintly. They stare across the gulf between  
them. Trying to  
link up. He scratches his cleft with his thumb. She grins and steps to him.  
Her arms going  
round him.

ROWAN

(softly)

Hi.

MICHAEL

(a faint smile)

Hi. (pause) You - you wanna get some breakfast...?  
Maybe see  
a movie...?

ROWAN

(hesitant. softly)

I - I... I can't, Michael. There's stuff --- at the  
clinic -

MICHAEL

(stiffening. curt)

Gotcha.

He steps back - and heads for the Mercedes. ROWAN winces.

ROWAN

Michael -

And she watches him get in the car and speed away.

EXT. DOWNTOWN NEW ORLEANS. LATER THAT MORNING

MICHAEL with a sad grin, looking in a department store window at an  
incongruous Christmaas  
display - Santa Claus in his sleigh, saxophone in hand riding down a replica  
of bBurbon Street.

INT. ROWAN'S LAB. SAME TIME

ROWAN stares frowning at a monitor full of symbols. She sits back, weary.  
closes her eyes  
Rubs them.

LASHER (UNSEEN)

Go on. Rowan. Go on.

ROWAN

(smacks the desk)

Leave me alone!

LASHER flickers into sight. she turns and hurls a notebook at him. It goes through him and hits the wall.

LASHER  
What is wrong...?

ROWAN  
Wrong...? Science is not magic.

LASHER  
(a beat. sottly)  
I do not understand...

ROWAN  
You went into the cells --- and you changed them.  
How...?!

LASHER  
There was no thought. There was no act. (pause) That  
is not  
what I am.

ROWAN  
I don't know what you are!!!

LASHER  
(passionate)  
That is what you must discover. (pause) see what I am,  
my love.  
With all your power - see me, and know what I am.

He approaches. She brace herself - holding her ground - not backing off.

LASHER  
Do not be atraid. Fear is not for you...

She straightens, tightening some psychic grip. She holds her hands out and frames his head. His face comes to hers - meets it - then merges with hers - And they start to rise - joined as they are - floating up...

ROWAN'S POV - A TRILLION FLECKS OF COLORED LIGHT  
Dense, dazzling. The POV moves deeper - the density lessens...fewer particles, frenzied, darting in a greenish haze... Deeper - terrifying speed now - zooming, plummeting toward nothingness. OBLIVION -a piercing SCREAM-

ROWAN - SUSPENDED IN THE AIR WITH LASHER  
SCREAMS - lurches free of him, and falls to the floor, dazed. LASHER swoops down to her, enfolding her gently.

LASHER

Don't stop!

She weakly waves him off - gulping for breath...

ROWAN

No!

LASHER

(intense. urgent)

Tell me what I am, Rowan.

She gazes at him painfully, shakes her head vehemently.

LASHER

Rowan... Rowan!

She covers her face with her hands and turns away from him. LASHER'S face darkens with anger - and jealousy.

LASHER

(cool anger)

You are thinking of him...

And she suddenly rises - and storms out of the room.

EXT. THE MANSION. DAY - AN HOUR LATER

ROWAN comes quickly through the gate. She walks inside the house and down the main hall.

ROWAN

Michael...? Michael...?!

Passing the LIVING ROOM entrance, something out at the corner of her eye stops her. She turns...

ROWAN'S POV - THE LIVING ROOM

where a magnificent Christmas tree rises to the ceiling, covered with globes and stars and tinsel so the whole room seems to shine.

ROWAN

walks slowly toward it - overwhelmed, tears filling her eyes

MICHAEL (OC)

Nice, huh...?

She turns and sees MICHAEL and rushes into his arms.

INT. MICHAEL AND ROWAN'S ROOM. LATER THAT DAY

They lie in bed, in each other's arms. Private Thoughts, A long beat. MICHAEL lets out a deep sigh.

MICHAEL

You've gone away from me, Ro... Someplace I don't know how to get to.

ROWAN

It's not true. You have to believe me.

MICHAEL is preparing his thoughts...making his mind up.

MICHAEL

I want us to leave. This isn't home, Rowan. I could tear the house down and start from scratch - and it still wouldn't be home. I want to go back to San Francisco - I want our child born somewhere that's free of death. That's all there is here! It's in the ground and the glass and the steel and the ground. (pause) I want to leave. If Lasher follows, So be it. Let him face us in a place where we belong!

MICHAEL waits. And - ROWAN looks away from him.

ROWAN

(her voice is sad, but hard)  
I can't.

MICHAEL

That's not good enough. Why not...?!

ROWAN

(suddenly erupting)  
I can't leave now. Don't ask me to explain! I just can't!

That does it. He's had it. He rips the covers off and stands. Grabs his pants and starts pulling them on.

MICHAEL

I've never asked you to explain yourself - because you used to let me inside! But I'm on the outside now... you put me there!

ROWAN

(melting to urgency)  
Michael - please - just. a little longer. Don't leave.

MICHAEL

(bitter. sarcastic)  
Why bother to ask, Ro...? Why don't you just make me stay...?

ROWAN

Stop it!

MICHAEL

How 'bout a backward hex with a three-quarter twist...?

ROWAN

(flaring)

You bastard!

He whirls round and grabs her violently by the shoulders.

MICHAEL

You could kill me - right now, couldn't you...?  
couldn't you...?!

(shakes her violently)

Tell me the truth --- is it Lasher...? Answer me!!

ROWAN

(torn up)

Michael - I'm sorry... Just give me -

MICHAEL

No.

They stare at each other - miles apart. A long beat.

MICHAEL

When you're ready to let me back into your heart, I'll  
come  
back to you.

He hustles his shirt and shoes on and storms out. ROWAN watches him go as  
tears stream down her  
face.... She runs out after him - down the stairs...

ROWAN

MICHAEL!!

The front door slams shut. Her face narrows in anger - fury rising as she  
turns and stares at  
the Christmas tree. POP! One of the shiny globes explodes. POP! Another  
goes. POP!

LASHER appears, hovering above the tree, smiling. The angel at the top of  
tree flies off and  
smashes against the wall.

LASHER

You are magnificent, my love.

As ROWAN stands, entranced in her powers. LASHER swirls round the tree. The  
ornaments sway in  
the maelstrom - tinsel and globes and trinkets flying off, srashing  
everywhere. Bits of glass  
fill the air like colored snow... LASHER encircle. ROWAN. She swoons to the  
floor - and he

joins with her...

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW ORLEANS AIRPORT TERMINAL. AFTERNOON

MICHAEL and AARON sit in a LOUNGE. MICHAEL looks drawn and weary. He takes a swig from a drink and grimaces.

MICHAEL  
I don't know what else to do. Maybe I just don't belong  
in her life.

(bitter) well - I'm already out of her life.

AARON  
Nothing was ever more false.

MICHAEL  
(leaning in. almost desperate)  
Then tell me. Is it Lasher....

AARON starts solemnly - and finally shakes his head.

AARON  
I only know she loves you - desperately.

MICHAEL fingers his glass. A self-loathing grin shows.

MICHAEL  
I'll probably be back in a week...but I can't spend  
Christmas in  
that house. (pause) you'll check on her - every  
day...?

AARON  
Every day (grins) twice.

MICHAEL  
(a beat)  
Aaron - do you believe in God...?

AARON  
(his benevolent smile)  
I believe we all come from the same force... Even  
Lasher.

He reaches out and covers MICHAEL's hand with his own.

AARON  
Be well, Michael. Be strong.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT TERMINAL. NIGHT

MICHAEL walks out into the fog. He gets in a taxi and tells the DRIVER -

MICHAEL

On the hill. 2712 Fairmont.

EXT. THE MAYFAIR ESTATE. SAME TIME

AARON comes through the grate. Up to the door. KNOCK-KNOCK. Knocks again. SILENCE. He walks along the porch, peering in the windows. He heads back down the walk.

The emerald bush's crimson buds have bloomed into huge flowers, He reaches to pick one - and is pricked by a thorn. blood trickles from his finger. He heads toward the gate.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO - MICHAEL'S HOUSE. NIGHT

Everything covered with sheets. MICHAEL wanders a half-empty scotch bottle in his hand, singing softly...

MICHAEL  
I left my heart in ---

He stops - his face creasing - gears turning in his head...

INT. MICHAEL'S ATTIC. A MINUTE LATER

MICHAEL digging in boxes. He finds what he wants - and yanks his tather's singed fireman's helmet in both hands... THE SEARING WHITE-HOT FLASH - AND

INT. A FIERY, FLAMING BUILDING [AS IF MICHAEL WERE THERE]

MICHAEL'S FATHER tosses the GIRL to the safety net. Suddenly - the window is blown in, shattering. MICHAEL'S FATHER falls to the floor. Above him the flames dance - then everything comes down on him...

MICHAEL'S POV swerves up to the rafters. There is LASHER, hovering in the flames, in command, undulating in the deadly heat, LASHER glances TO CAMERA (to MICHAEL) - and smiles...

MICHAEL  
drops the helmet - as if burned - and races out.

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM. A MINUTE LATER

MICHAEL stands with the phone to his ear - revving like a madman - listening to the RING on the other end of the line.

MICHAEL  
Pick up the fucking phone, Ro!

INT. THE MANSION - THE LIVING ROOM. SAME TIME - NIGHT

ROWAN, out cold on the floor. The phone is RINGING. Her eyes open. She struggles to her feet. Stubling into the hall - toward the phone. And - BZZZ-KPIT-KPIT. She freezes. BZZZ-KPIT-KPIT. Upstairs...? She turns to the stairs - hesitates - and starts up...

INT. THE TALAMASCA HEADQUARTERS. SAME TIME - NIGHT

A WOMAN stands with a phone. AARON comes INTO FRME and takes it from her.

AARON (INTO THE PHONE)

Michael...?

INTERCUT between AARON and MICHAEL in his bedroom, at a fever-pitch, figuring it out as he rambles...

MICHAEL

Aaron - lieten to me... It's been Lasher - from the start!

AARON

What are you talk---

MICHAEL

He chose ME for ROWAN --- when I was a child!

BACK TO ROWAN IN THE MANSION

on the second floor, outside Diedre's room. BZZZ-KPIT... rt's in there. She walks inside. BZZZ-KPIT....

BACK TO MICHAEL AND AARON ON THE PHONE

MICHAEL

Carlotta was too strong for Lasher. She got Rowan away from him - to San Francisco... but that took her away from me, too! (pause) Aaron - Lasher killed my father! That's what got me and mother out of New Orleans - and back to Rowan - so we would meet! (chilled to the bone) Aaron his power. . . His control...

AARON

(equally chilled)  
Rowan...

MICHAEL

You have to warn her - this second! I'm catching the next flight back!

BACK TO ROWAN IN DIEDRE'S ROOM

staring at a sheetrock wall - all senses primed. BZZZ-KPIT. suddenly, she SMASHES her fist through - and starts tearing the wall away. Ripping the last chunk away - and there sits

GIFFORD - decapitated, drenched in blood. In his lap is the gold saw, like a platter - and resting on it is his head. The cat licks at the mouth, wide open in a scream.

INT. A CAB ON A HIGHWAY. SAME TIME - LATE NIGHT

AARON speeds down the road. LASHER suddenly appears beside him, grinning faintly. AARON glances at him. stunned...

LASHER  
Petyr van Abel would have been proud of your devotion,  
Aaron....  
your compassion. And I am grateful for them.

AARON looks back to the road, trying to shut out the specter.

LASHER  
The Talamasca's histories made Rowan's nature clear to  
her in a way  
I never could... and I am thankful for that.

AARON'S face sinks in realization of a centuries-old folly.

AARON  
That is our purpose in all this...?

LASHER  
Since the beginning (sighs) We have been together a  
long time,  
you and I. And now it ends...

The car suddenly swerves violently. AARON fights for control. As they skid and sverve down the road.

LASHER  
Rowan fights her feelings for me, but her passion - her  
power -  
they conspire against her love. And I grow stronger. -

Finally - AARON wrestles back control of the car.

AARON  
(triumphant)  
But there are still limits to your powers, aren't  
there...? Some of  
us are without desire - and we exhaust you --- don't  
we...?

The car enters a tunnel. Suddenly - up ahead - A BRICK WALL COMPLETELY FILLS THE TUNNEL.

AARON stiffens - floors the gas - and zooms through the wall. It dissolves as he passes through. The car exits the tunnel. AARON glances over at LAHER - and AARON grins... And -

- the steering goes. AARON twists the wheel - but the car won't respond - and he's heading toward a steep embankment....

AARON  
I'm right in the middle of the road! There's nothing wrong with the car!

LASHER  
Yes...? Let us wait and see...

The car swerves off the road. The cliffside looms...

AARON  
I'm not afraid, Lasher...

AARON stares - unflinching - as the car barrels over the cliff, soaring down. down... The ground racing up at him...

AARON  
I am not AFRAID!

The car plows into the ground - and suddenly - AARON is staring at the highway's center-line as he speeds along.

LASHER  
You are strong, Aaron...  
(an evil smile)  
...but others are not so strong.

And he vanishes. AARON'S face creases in confusion. Huh...? A school bus is coming up toward them in the other direction, on the other side of the road. AARON'S face whitens...

AARON  
Lasher, where are you...? Lasher...?! LASHER!

LASHER (UNSEEN)  
If not for yourself then fear for the children...

AARON can see the bus clearly now. Packed with children. And he can see the sudden, uncomprehending look of terror on the DRIVER'S face. - as he inexplicably loses control of the

bus. It suddenly skids - and swerves out of lane - heading straight for a head-on with AARON.

AARON hesitates - uncertain - wavering - seconds to impact - and --- he swerves out of the bus path at the last moment -- sacrificing himself - flying off the cliff...

INT. THE MANSION - SAME TIME - LATE NIGHT

ROWAN stumbles out of Diedre's room, down the stairs, freaked, looking over her shoulder. And - she freezes. seeing something that isn't there. Her face twists

BACK TO THE CLIFFSIDE - SAME TIME

AARON'S car tumbles down through the air, hits bottom - and EXPLODES in a fireball.

BACK TO ROWAN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS

as she is sent reeling to the floor. Dazed, fighting a blackout. - sliding down into her dream...

THE OPERATING ROOM IN ROWAN'S DREAM

ROWAN works feverishly on the OUT OF FRAME patient. THE MASKED FIGURES watch silently.

ROWAN

I - I can't do it!

The others urge her on - imploring, encouraging her-

ROWAN

(pointing OUT OF FRAME. frantic)

But look! LOOK! How can I do it...?

OC - a muffled CRY.

TILT DOWN SLOWLY - the edge of the operating table comes INTO FRAME - and lying on it, a tiny hand... PULL OUT to REVEAL ALL for the first time... It is a truly bizarre entity: the torso of a man - with the head, arms and legs, toes and fingers of a tiny newborn.

MASKED FIGURE

Go on! Help him!

MASKED FIGURE

Help us!

ROWAN

HOW...?!

A FIGURE removes its mask - it is MARGUERITE. She takes a scalpel and cuts the entity from navel to collarbone, then folds back the skin --- within the chest cavity, the emerald pendant is where a heart should be. ROWAN SCREAMS. All but one of the FIGURES take off their masks:

they are the twelve MAYFAIR WITCHES - and JULIEN.

JULIEN

Help him! You were made for this?

ROWAN

I can't do it! How can I do it...?!

SUZANNE

Stop doubting your power!!

Then - the remaining MASKED FIGURE speaks:

MASKED FIGURE

No! Don't listen to your words, Rowan. Listen to the feeling behind your words. Listen to your heart.

He removes his mask. it is ARRON.

AARON

It is not your power that you doubt. When you say - "I can't do it" - you are saying - "I MUST NOT DO IT!" You are saying "I WILL NOT DO IT!"

(his warm, kind smile)

This is what your heart tells you.

ROWAN ON THE FLOOR AT THE FOOT OF THE STAIRS coming groggily out of the dream. She rises unsteadily. And LASHER stands before her. Her face hardens. He starts toward her. ROWAN stands her ground - sensing danger.

ROWAN

STOP!'

Lasher halts - shimmering. Staring deep into one another.

ROWAN

(pause) you killed Aaron was in the dream. A dream tilled with spirits. him, didn't you...?

LASHER

(a beat)

It was an accident. (smiles) Gifford, too.

She trembles. Her tears come. But - she steels herself. A long beat.

ROWAN

The portraits, Lasher. Why are the witches always before a door...? Tell me, Lasher. Now!

LASHER

(his smile flashes)  
They want to come back. (pause) We have a pact - of mutual desire and consent. The Mayfairs ar. a beautiful tapestry. I have weaved you all together - from the start. (pause) I brought Petyr Van Abel to Suzanne. He had genius in him. Scientific, precise. It was a perfect start. And on it has gone - father to mother... sister to brother... father to daughter...

ROWAN shudders. Turning ghostly pale.

ROWAN  
Oh god...

LASHER  
Julien was your father Your great-grandfather - your grandfather - and your father. All one in the same... That is why he fought carlotta for your life.

ROWAN is shaken - backing up in horror.

LASHER  
The Mayfair pact. Rowan: when I am flesh - I will unlock the door - and the witches will come through. (soaring)  
You are the key to the door for the witches - and for me! You are the thirteenth witch.

Laslirn glows brighter...

LASHER  
I will be --- perfect. (pause) That is why I chose Michael...

ROWAN blanches. Thrown for a loop. LASHER smiles.

LASHER  
The boy who would turn his dreams into reality. The exquisite imagination! So aesthetic, so vulnerable... The boy so special, he could see me! (pause) And I knew he was the one --- for us.

(he smilas)  
You thought it love at first sight...? (shakes his head) I chose him for you. (pause) The union is human perfection.

She doesn't quite get it. she's revving, furious, confused.

LASHER

I created you to create me --- and you have...

And now ROWAN sees it all. stumbling back, terrified...

LASHER

It's growing inside you... Waiting to change...  
Waiting for me.

And ROWAN turns - and runs... A door SLAMS shut as she races toward it.

LASHER (UNSEEN)

Did you think you could trick me, my love...?

She whirls round - LASHER floats before her - glowing like never before - a bright, pulsating emerald green.

LASHER

You thought I could not see into your soul...? I made your soul!

ROWAN back up against the wall. LASHER spreads out - huge, dark, roiling. Towering above her. the clock begins to chime. MIDNIGHT. GONG-GONG-GONG...

LASHER

It is Christmas Eve, my love The witching hour is at hand,  
when Christ was born into the world - when the Word was finally made Flesh --- and I would be born too. I am done  
with waiting!

He gathers force, funnelling in on himself, whirling like a tornado - and streams toward her like a jet of green vapor -

ROWAN

NOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!

--- and the whirlwind jets up between her legs --- into her --- and disappears. She HOWLS in unearthly pain - and falls to the floor. Her water breaks - blood seeping now from between her legs -

ROWAN

(absolutely, totally, completely freaked)  
Oh god - oh my god - no, godddd, NO!!!

She SHRIEKS as a vicious contraction jolts her to her very being. And --- something is coming out of her...

Out it slides --- the ENTITY FROM HER DREAM. On its back - bloody, shining - a man-sized head, its infant arms and fingers and legs and feet groping and and moving and --- elongating and growing with each breath, as it cries the CRY from ROWAN'S dream... ROWAN slumps into oblivion...

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP TO

EXT. THE MANSION. EARLY THE NEXT MORNING - CHRISTMAS DAY

TRACKING with MIHAEL  
as he barrels through the gate and bursts inside the house.

MICHAEL  
ROWAN!! ROWAN!!

Racing down the hall, he freezes - staring into the LIVING ROOM. Everything topsy-turvy. A carpet of broken, colored glass and pine needles covers the floor. He races toward the stairs and skids to stop - a thick pool of blood on the floor there. MICHAEL races back down the hall...

MICHAEL  
ROWAN!!!!!!

EXT. THE MANSION GARDEN. MOMENTS LATER

MICHAEL races INTO FRAME - and stops - staring at a tall FIGURE - clad only in pants - its back to him.

THE FIGURE slowly turns round. it is a man - delicate yet muscular but the skin, the expression, the texture of him is brand-new, newborn. And his face is a perfect mix of ROWAN and MICHAEL. In his hand, he holds one at the newly-bloomed emerald-and-crimson flowers. He smiles...

THE MAN  
I made these.

It is LASHER'S voice. He holds the flower to his nose and inhales deeply- His brand-new face lights with the most sensual of discoveries.

LASHER THE MAN  
Ahhh... It is incredible, is it not...?  
(holds the flower out to MICHAEL)  
Here. For you, Father.

And MICHAEL knows. He HOWLS and stampedes toward LASHER, who waits with a delighted expression. MICHAEL barrels into him - they go sprawling to the ground. MICHAEL pummeling him, tearing at him, lost to murder and vengeance.

MICHAEL  
You fucking bastard! You killed my child!!!

But LASHER is laughing --- rejoicing in the sensations, the pain, the movement, the flesh...

LASHER THE MAN  
But I am your child! I AM YOUR SON!

MICHAEL  
Where is Rowan...?! Where is she...?!!

LASHER THE MAN  
And this is pain...? Father you cannot hurt me. No one can.

And LASHER rises, lifting MICHAEL up like a toy - dangling him in the air.

LASHER THE MAN  
I am ALIVE Father!

And he flings MICHAEL across the garden. LASHER smiles, and heads for MICHAEL ungainly on his new legs.

ROWAN COMES CARWLING OUT OF THE HOUSE  
- weakened, haggard, bloodied, pale.

ROWAN  
Michael...

LASHER - standing over MICHAEL - turns toward the sound - and MICHAEL tries to crawl away.

LASHER THE MAN  
(grinning)  
You want Michael...?

LASHER struts to MICHAEL and picks him up by the collar.

LASHER THE MAN  
Here! Here he is!

MICHAEL hangs still in LASHER'S grip, like the marionette. LASHER jostles him, shakes him with a smile.

LASHES THE MAN  
You could use some strings, I think..

ROWAN is trying to crawl, but she's so weak.

ROWAN

Put - him - down! His - his heart...

LASHER THE MAN

How is your heart, Father...? Is the Timex still  
ticking...?

He punches MICHAEL brutally in the chest. And then strikes him again.  
MICHAEL HOWLS -  
breathless, eyes bulging- LASHER starts parading around the garden holding  
MICHAEL in the air  
like a broken marionette..

LASHER THE MAN

(mad. possessed. overdosing on life)

Look at me, Mother! Am I not a wonder...?! Something  
new under the  
sun! The world has never seen the likes of me!

MICHAEL

(a barely audible HISS)

A monster among men...

LASHER

(suddenly expressionless. cold)

Rowan and I will be together now. My time has come.  
Your time is  
gone.

ROWAN

No! Don't! Lasher!!!

LASHER strikes a deadly blow to MICHAEL'S chest. MICHAEL seems to cave in..  
And LASHER hurls  
MICHAEL into the pool.

MICHAEL SINKS LIKE A STONE BENEATH THE WATER  
Sinking into death for the second and last time. And - the WITCHES seep out  
in the water  
surrounding him.

MICHAEL

Let go, Michael. It is done - and he is beautiful!  
Perfect.

DEBORAH

We can go through now. Lasher will open the door and  
bring us back- (pause) Goodbye, Michael. Let go now.  
Let go...

The phantoms fade away. Michael sinks to the bottom. DEAD.

BACK AT POOLSIDE

LASHER stands, beaming and proud, staring into the water. ROWAN drags  
herself to the pool -  
and stares down in horror.

ROWAN

Oh god nooooooooooooo....

She tries to slide into the pool - but LASHER picks her up gently and deposits her on the grass.

LASHER THE MAN

Mother - you must rest. You're still bleeding. Rest. please...

The WIND suddenly picks up. The trees sway. And then - the witches' VOICES swirl around  
LASHER and ROWAN

SUZANNE (UNSEEN)

Lasher - bring us through!

DEBORAH (UNSEEN)

Now, lasher - it is our time.

The VOICES beseech him, coax him, plead... And LASHER smiles up at the sky - -- a widening, cunning, wicked smile...

LASHER THE MAN

Your time...? Oh, my foolish ones - but you are wrong!  
It is my time  
I have Rowan!  
MINE! I am unto myself - one of a kind! (pause) And  
Who else do I need...?

SUZANNE (UNSEEN)

(anger in her voice. and panic)

The pact Lasher! The pact! We have waited. Now it is our time!

LASHER THE MAN

(a harsh laugh)

I have no time for your time! Be gone!

DEBORAH (UNSEEN)

(desperate)

Lasher - please...! Save us! Bring us through!

LASHER THE MAN

(suddenly vicious)

BE GONE! - or I will send you where there are no worlds  
at all!  
GO!

The WIND dies. SILENCE. He turns and sees ROWAN dragging herself toward the pool. He strides over and drags her away.

ROWAN

(tries to shake free of him)  
Let me go... Michaellllllll...

LASHER THE MAN  
ENOUGH! He is dead. You are here for me now. Michael  
is  
gone!

ROWAN  
(venomous. spitting it out)  
I'll destroy you. I swear it! If you don't kill me,  
I'll find a -

LASHER THE MAN  
(stunned. sincerely wounded)  
'Kill you...?' You are my mother. Do you think I  
would hurt you...?

She twists out of his grasp and sprawls on the ground. Glaring up at him.  
And then -

The WIND comes up again. Whipping the leaves around. Gathering force.  
LASHER looks to the  
sky, perplexed, surprised. His newborn eyes wide and curious...

SUZANNE (UNSEEN)  
Rowan - he has cheated us all? (pause) You are the  
thirteenth.  
Use your anger. Use the power! USE US!

ROWAN slowly rises, as if pulled up. The sky darkens. The WIND swirls.  
LASHER watches like a  
child, turning round and round - and stares now into his mother's eyes.

LASHER THE MAN  
(soft)  
Mother...

ROWAN glares it him. Her body seems to harden. Her eyes flare. LIGHTNING  
FLASHES - and a  
hard rain pours down. LASHER'S expression changes. Doubt...? Fear...?

LASHER THE MAN  
(sott. heartrending)  
I am your flesh... These are your eyes...

But she is steel. More than steel. She is an energy the earth has not known  
before... And he  
sees it in her fact. His melancholy smile comes.

LASHER THE MAN  
(tender. loving)  
I am your son. I would not wound you. I could not -  
ever.

ROWAN  
(eerily soft)

I know. (pause) you are my son -

LASHER almost melts at her words. He reaches out to her -

ROWAN  
(turning cold as death)  
- and may god forgive me.

He freezes - arms outstretched, mouth agape. She looks to the sky.

ROWAN  
(imperious)  
Now! NOW!!!

The WIND is whipped into a frenzy... A branch is torn from a tree - and crashes into LASHER.  
He stumbles. Thorned bushes are ripped from the ground and tear at his flesh. His blood runs...

In the sky, a dozen whirling funnels appear descending like avenging WINDS. LASHER watches - his face darkening. ROWAN'S arms rise pointing majestically like a conductor directing a terrible symphony of destruction. The tunnels follow her movements, whirling and gliding... And terror rains down on LASHER

TREES, FLAGSTONE, ROCKS, THE WROUGHT-IRON FENCE - EVERYTHING IS BEING UPROOTED, TORN APART - AND SENT WHIRLING, SLASHING, AND CRASHING DOWN ON LASHER. He falls to the ground.

LASHER THE MAN  
MOTHER MY FLESH!!! DO NOT DO THIS!

ROWAN is ominous - eyes riveted on him. She points to the house - and it starts to come apart. SHINGLES, TIMBERS, WINDOWS... TEARING LOOSE, FLYING THROUGH THE AIR - SHOWERING DOWN ON LASHER --- RIPPING HIM APART.

LASHER THE MAN  
The pain... my beautiful flesh!

Flesh tearing off bones! bones pulled from sockets. His very being coming apart, disintegrating. His cries begin to fade in the cacophony. ROWAN'S eyes never leave him. Her arms swing round and she points at what remains at her son... The funnels descend on LASHER in a frenzy. Everything is obscured by the cloud of dust and matter... Then - a final, fading SHRIEK come. - and then --- SILENCE..

ROWAN's hands drop to her side... She seems to lessen... to settle back into herself. The

funnels fade... the dust settles... and where LASHER lay - NOTHING... The garden is gone. The mansion is gone. Total destruction.

ROWAN comes out of her trance. She races to the pool and dives in and resurfaces with MICHAEL'S lifeless body. She drags him up onto the ground - and frantically tries to revive him over and over again.

Finally - she SMASHES his chest as she did long ago - but MICHAEL lies still. She drops upon him, exhausted - weeping, inconsolable... Then -- she looks up to the sky - fury and tears in her eyes.

ROWAN

You betrayed him! All of you! Look! LOOK AT HIM!!!  
He believed there was goodness in you - and you BETRAYED him!

She stands, seething - like a volcano about to erupt. Thinking. Focusing. Something is coming together inside her... she is remarkable. She reaches to the sky -

ROWAN

I AM THE THIRTEENTH! I AM THE KEY! COME THROUGH THE DOOR! ALL OF YOU - COME - THROUGH - THE - DOOR!

And the fabric of the sky tears... An emerald haze shows beyond it... Arid the PHANTOM-WITCHES come soaring through the gash in the world - speeding toward their mistress...

ROWAN

All of us are one - from the beginning to now! So I command you - come into me! Make THIRTEEN ONE!

AND THE WITCHES SWOOP DOWN - AND DIVE INTO ROWAN - FILL HER - BECOME HER. SHE BRIMS WITH POWER. ALMOST A CELESTIAL GLOW.

She kneels beside MICHAEL, takes his hands and presses them against her heart. Her tears cascade down her cheeks...

ROWAN

Come back to me, Michael. Please, Michael --- come back. I love you  
I LOVE YOU, MICHAEL! Oh, God - COME BACK TO ME!

She leans down and kisses him - deeply, deep as their love - long, long, long...

And ---

MICHAEL opens his eyes. Rasping, coughing, shaking with the new life Rowna has given him...  
ROWAN, on her knees, lifts him up and cradles his head in her chest...

MICHAEL  
(barely a whisper)  
Lasher... Where --- where is ---

ROWAN  
(loving. soothing)  
It's alright...it's alright. He's gone, Michael...  
Gone.

SLOW ZOOM INTO ROWAN'S FACE

ROWAN  
Everything's gone, Michael. Everything except for us.  
(pause)  
But we're here. Together. You and I...

HOLD ON ECU OF ROWAN

She smiles strangely, and --- HER FACE FLICKERS.... AND THEN, FROM SOME NEW INNER CURRENT, HER FACE STROBES BIZARRELY WITH THE FACES OF TWELVE OTHERS WHO CAME LONG BEFORE HER...

ROWAN  
(very very softly)  
Just you and...

FADE TO BLACK

THE END