

Momma

by

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## PROLOGUE

*Darkness.*

*A disembodied woman's voice floats into the space. She is singing the Gershwins' Someone to Watch Over Me. As she reaches the chorus, lights come up to reveal a GIRL. She listens to the melody and begins to twirl in time with it.*

*Twirling. And humming. Twirling. And humming.*

*Then one final twirl which comes to a delightful, dizzying halt.*

*She laughs.*

*Then suddenly she is enwrapped in water.*

*She chokes and kicks her legs. The disembodied voice cuts out. More kicks follow. It grows into a wild, thrashing, desperate storm.*

*And then suddenly all is still.*

*Blackout.*

## SCENE 1

*It is a dark, dark night.*

*HELEN, a white woman in her mid-forties, enters. She is cradling something swathed in so many blankets we cannot see what it is. She has been crying. She's got blood on her hands and legs. But her face... her face is that of placid waters. To look in her eyes is to see not her, but something beyond.*

*It is so silent we can hear each breath she takes as she crosses around innumerable amounts of clutter. She sits down on a folding chair next to a TV dinner tray holding a laptop, a pomegranate, and a knife. She rocks her bundle.*

HELEN

(eerie, almost sing-song)

Why couldn't Momma hold baby girl? Baby girl was just too small. Momma pulled her out. All alone. Momma pulled her out. Baby didn't cry. Doctor said I told you so. Doctor said stop. Momma said no. Doctor said. Doctor- No. Did baby girl love her Momma? Momma really hopes she did. Bouncing little baby girl. Sweet little bouncing babe. Left the nest but didn't fly. Momma's poor little baby girl.

(She begins to unwrap the bundle, revealing a stillborn fetus. Helen handles it delicately.)

HELEN (Continued)

Did Momma love her baby girl? Yes. Yes. Yes. Yesyesyesyesyesyesyesyes. YES. Momma loved her baby girl.

(She kisses the fetus.)

Momma's first little girl. Momma's sixth little babe. Sixth time's the charm. Sixth time's the charm. Momma tried her best. Baby girl was just too small.

(Beat)

Doctor said no more little babes. Doctor said. Doctor said. So what now? What. Now? TELL ME!

VOICE

*Good girls do as they're told, Helen. When someone tells you, "No," you listen-*

(Helen reacts violently, going to a picture of a white woman and young white girl and knocking it face down. She shoves it deeper into the clutter and opens her laptop. She cycles through numerous tabs and searches: fertility rituals, voodoo, ancient rituals, witchcraft, materials for spellcraft, moon phases, crystals for spellcraft, energy channeling, is it safe to burn incense while pregnant?, etc. She finally lands on a website with a picture of a heavily pregnant goddess. Helen picks up the fetus with great care and gently places it where the girl once stood.)

HELEN

Six little babes lost to the void. Five little babes with no faces or limbs. Five little babes lost far too soon. One *true* baby girl.

(She takes the knife makes a cut in the pomegranate.)

HELEN (Continued)

Momma's gonna get her back. Momma's gonna. Don't you worry, baby girl.

(She cracks open the pomegranate and crushes the flesh in her hands. She tosses the remains on the tray and anoints the fetus. The lights turn a stark magenta.)

HELEN (Continued)

Seed for seed. Blood for blood. Body for body. Soul for soul. Life for death, and death for life.

(She cuts her finger and squeezes a drop of blood onto the fetus.)

A seed with blood and body and soul. A seed replanted from blood, body, and soul. A soul born again. Life for death take death for life.

(She raises the fetus into the air. The lights flicker violently.)

HELEN (Continued)

Seed. Blood. Body. Soul.

(She kisses the fetus.)

Life reborn.

(She places it back reverently.)

So mote it be.

(Lights begin to fade. Helen's search history returns, licking at our necks, tracing its fingers down our spines. In the darkness, it crescendos.)

HELEN (Continued)

(rising above the sound)

Seed. Blood. Body. Soul.

(A cacophony. A flash of light. Suddenly all is silence.)

## SCENE 2

*We hear the sound of a heartbeat, but something is off about it. It grows louder and stranger as lights rise dimly in a swirling, mystical pattern.*

*A countdown appears on the walls in Helen's space.*

*9 Months. 40 Weeks. 274 Days.*

*The GIRL gasps back to life in her space. She coughs and wills as much air as possible into her lungs.*

*She looks around in a daze and sees HELEN in the middle of a prayer. Meanwhile, lights slowly rise as EVELYN, a young Black woman in her early twenties, enters. She holds a brown paper bag tightly in her hands. She approaches carefully. She takes a moment for herself and her surroundings. Then:*

EVELYN

Hi Mom.

(Beat)

I know you're probably wondering why I'm here right now. I should be studying. I know. But...

(She shifts uncomfortably.)

I wanted to see you. Okay? I feel like I haven't been down since before midterms and- That's too long... Also there's- There's something else. I... Haven't been acting like myself lately. I- I've spent almost four years being- I haven't gone out once. So... I did.

(She shifts again.)

A couple of my friends and I hit one of the bars downtown. It was fun. We danced. Drank. Not too much, just enough to let loose and... There was this guy. I know what you're thinking, but it's not like that. Except... I kind of- We had sex. I met him and then an hour later we were back at my apartment... It was a total mistake and I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

(She takes in what she just blurted.)

I don't know if telling you that was supposed to make me feel better or not. I just felt you should know.

Because you were right. Not about everything--I'm not going to Hell or anything--but about it being worth it. It wasn't. You told me it should be special and- I mean, I had fun, but... That didn't feel- I wasn't me. That wasn't the way you raised me.

(Beat)

I brought a bottle of wine.

(She opens the bag and fishes out a bottle of red wine.)

It's the kind you like. The one you were saving up for to have when I graduate. I know I haven't exactly graduated yet, but I just thought that maybe we could have a drink. To celebrate? Not for the- For good luck. On my exams. They're in two weeks and not that I need it, but... Yeah.

(She goes to open it and quickly realizes she forgot to grab a corkscrew.)

Shit. I mean- Ahhh fuck. I'm sorry. I- I just- Ugh. Stupid.

(Beat)

I can hear you. Laughing. See your nose crinkling and everything. Don't say you don't do that. You do. I would know. I got it from you.

(She sighs. Sits down, clutches the bottle.)

I keep hoping I'll find a note you wrote me or a voicemail message or... Something. Because I didn't save those and... I wish I could hear your voice.

(Beat)

I miss you. I just... I hope you know that.

(A pause. Evelyn sits with her mother.  
Lights drift over to Helen and the girl.)

## SCENE 3

*A shift of focus back to HELEN in the middle of her spell.*

HELEN

Seed. Blood. Body. Soul.

*(A flash of something dark and deep. Helen bristles as if she's gotten too close to a flame. It dies down. She looks to the fetus.)*

HELEN (Continued)

Baby girl...?

GIRL

Mom?

HELEN

D-did it work?

*(She rushes to the the ritual.)*

Okay okay okay. Here we go, baby. Here. We. Go.

*(Helen lifts the fetus and holds it close. The mystical light begins to shine. Helen senses it.)*

HELEN (Continued)

Baby girl?

GIRL

What's going on?

HELEN

Is it- A-are you really there?

GIRL

Mom, I-

HELEN

Oh my god. Oh my god. Yes! Yesyesyesyesyes! YES!! I knew I could do it. I knew I could save you.

GIRL

Save me?



HELEN

Yes. Yes. I've got you right here. See? Momma's got you. Come back to me, baby.

(The mystical light flickers and the girl shudders.)

GIRL

I can't.

HELEN

Momma's here.

(The light flickers again. The girl shudders more intensely.)

HELEN

Baby girl?

GIRL

I'm. Trying.

HELEN

Come on now-

(The mystical light starts to wane. The girl chokes.)

HELEN

(in one breath)

Baby girl?! What's going on? What happened? Are you okay?

(The mystical light begins to go out for longer periods of time. The girl starts to stumble, unable to keep herself standing.)

GIRL

Mom?

HELEN

No. Nonononono. Stay here. Don't leave.

(Beat)

Please-

GIRL

What's happening?

HELEN

Please baby girl... Please.

GIRL

I- I don't- Like this.

(The light is barely hanging on. The girl takes shallower and shallower breaths.)

HELEN

Okay okay okay. Let's see. Um... Something- Something with the- The incantation? Seed and blood and body and soul. Seed. Blood. Body. Soul. Seed-

(The mystical light begins to be suffused with something more sinister. We hear unintelligible whispers. The girl looks around, frightened.)

GIRL

Mom-

HELEN

Life for death and death for life.

GIRL

I'm scared.

HELEN

Don't worry. Momma's gonna make it all better.  
(chanting)

A seed with blood and body and soul. A seed replanted from blood, body, and soul.

GIRL

(choking)

Stop.

HELEN

A soul born anew!

(The whispers disappear and the girl collapses as another burst of something dark and deep thrusts through the space. Helen recoils as if struck. She looks up and knows something is wrong.)

HELEN

Did I...?

VOICE

(creeping in)

*Look what you've done, Helen.*

HELEN

(to herself)

No no no no no.

VOICE

(beratingly)

*Everything was going fine. Just fine. We were going to be okay. But now-*

HELEN

This can't- No. Please no.

VOICE

*God, I can't even look at you right now.*

HELEN

I didn't mean to. I- I'm sorry. Baby girl...

(Slowly, the heartbeat returns, but it's more normal this time. It grows as the mystical light returns and filters through the space. It dimly reveals EVELYN, still at her mother's grave. Everything builds until... the girl sits up with a gasp. In unison, Evelyn's breath catches and her hand flies to her stomach. The girl looks in Evelyn's direction and then back to Helen.)

GIRL

Mom?

(No response.)

Mom?

(She approaches and reaches out to Helen.)

GIRL (Continued)

Don't cry.

(She places a hand on Helen.)

HELEN

You...

GIRL

I'm okay.

(Helen looks to the fetus. It rests in her hands unmoving. She looks up at the girl, grabs her hand with both of her own, and traces a line to her stomach.)

HELEN

I...

(She lets go of the girl and rubs her stomach.)

A-am I?

(The girl looks back to Evelyn who has decided to say goodbye to her mom and return home.)

GIRL

You... You did it.

(Helen lets out a noise of relief and delight and joy and wraps the girl in a hug. The lights flicker ominously.)

## SCENE 4

*HELEN spins the GIRL around and begins to dance as she tidies up her space. How much tidying is actually able to be done is suspect. It seems more like rearranging piles into different piles.*

*The girl watches Helen curiously as she unearths a broom from behind one of the piles and begins to sweep. She hums the Gershwin's Someone to Watch Over Me as she sweeps.*

*The girl grows bored of this and lets out a sigh. The lights flicker strangely. Helen doesn't notice.*

VOICE

(hauntingly)

*Baby... Baby...*

GIRL

It's musty in here.

(No response.)

And there's not a lot of room.

(Still no response.)

You have a lot of stuff.

HELEN

Hmm?

GIRL

There's too many things in this room.

HELEN

Nonsense. There's not that many-

GIRL

Is all of this yours?

HELEN

Some of it. Other things were here before I was.

GIRL

But you keep it all? By choice?

HELEN

You never know when you might need something.

(Helen sets the broom aside and pulls out a cracked porcelain doll with ratty clothing from the mess. The girl grimaces at it.)

VOICE  
*It's all just junk.*

GIRL  
*It's all just junk.*

HELEN  
*Baby girl?*

VOICE  
*All of this?*

VOICE  
*It's junk.*

GIRL  
*It's junk.*

HELEN  
*Don't say that.*

GIRL  
*But it's true.*

VOICE  
(muttering)  
*Should have thrown it out years ago before-*

(Helen buries the doll in another pile and the voice dissipates.)

HELEN  
*This stuff is not junk. This... It's all a part of me. My childhood. And it'll be yours one day.*

(Beat)  
*Everything in this house has a purpose, baby girl. You don't throw away things with purpose. You cherish them. Understood?*

GIRL  
*Mmm.*

HELEN  
*Good. Now-*

GIRL  
*So if this wasn't all yours then who did it belong to?*

HELEN  
*Different people, baby girl. Family.*

GIRL

Your mom?

HELEN

And others.

GIRL

What was she like?

HELEN

Umm... She was... She was one of a kind.

(The girl accepts this and wanders over to some of the clutter. We hear unintelligible whispers from the voice lingering. It unnerves Helen.)

HELEN

Maybe that's enough tidying for today.

GIRL

Don't stop! I wanna see more.

HELEN

I really should be resting. I need to keep you healthy-

GIRL

Please.

HELEN

Okay... Just a little longer. Let's see.

(Helen pulls out the framed picture of the woman and girl from earlier. The girl is instantly at Helen's side. Helen looks away.)

GIRL

This is her. Your mom. And you.

HELEN

Mhmm.

GIRL

You don't look very happy in this picture.

HELEN

That's because it's a proper portrait.

VOICE

*You need to smile more.*

VOICE

*You don't smile enough.*

GIRL

You don't smile enough.

HELEN

I...

GIRL

Your dress is pretty though, Mom. Do you still have it?

HELEN

Ummm... I think-

GIRL

Where is it?

HELEN

I don't really know-

GIRL

You just said you had it.

HELEN

I don't-

GIRL

Go get it.

HELEN

Maybe later, baby girl-

GIRL

Why? What did you do?

VOICE

(overlapping; forcefully)

*What did you do? Did you do something to it?*

VOICE

*Did you ruin it?*

GIRL

Did you ruin it?



VOICE

*You always ruin everything.*

HELEN

No. I just- It might need to be washed or-

VOICE

(dominatingly)

*This is why I don't give you nice things. You can't be trusted to take care of them.*

(Helen drops the portrait with a crash and kicks it into the clutter. The voice's presence still lingers. Helen is visibly shaken.)

GIRL

I'm... Sorry?

HELEN

What?

GIRL

I upset you.

HELEN

No. No no no. I'm fine.

GIRL

You don't look-

HELEN

I'm *fine*. Really. I just- I need to clean this place up. Start making bottles for the fridge and stocking up on diapers. Need to make preparations for when-

GIRL

You spend a lot of time here.

HELEN

I- I suppose.

GIRL

All by yourself. All alone.

HELEN

I'm not alone anymore. I have you.

GIRL

What about before me?

HELEN

Well...

GIRL

It must have been boring. Nothing to do. No one to talk to.

HELEN

I managed. That's all behind us now. Now... We can do whatever we want to.

GIRL

Can we go outside?

HELEN

Sure.

GIRL

Okay. Let's go.

HELEN

How about we go later?

GIRL

Why?

HELEN

Umm... Mommy's eyes are very sensitive. And the sun is just brutal-

GIRL

You're lying.

HELEN

Baby girl-

GIRL

You're doing that thing with your hands.

HELEN

I don't know what-

(The girl places a hand on Helen.)

VOICE

(scoldingly)  
*You can't ever sit still.*

VOICE

*That's how I know you're  
 lying.*

GIRL

*That's how I know you're  
 lying.*

GIRL

You do that when you're uncomfortable. When you don't  
 want to talk about something. You do it a lot.

(Helen tries to remove the girl's grip, but  
 she holds firm.)

No more secrets.

VOICE

(echoing)  
*No more secrets.*

HELEN

Okay. Okay. Fine.

(Beat)

Momma isn't supposed to be here. She... The papers  
 that say I own this house were never put in my name.  
 When- When my mother... went to go stay with her  
 husband's family upstate she... Anyway, this place is  
 abandoned as far as anyone is concerned. And I don't  
 want to have to talk to people- I don't want to have  
 to talk to anyone if I don't want to.

(Pause)

So... We can go out. But later, please. Momma doesn't  
 want to be bothered.

VOICE

(mockingly)  
*Momma doesn't want to be bothered.*

(Helen shrinks in on herself.)

VOICE

*What? Are you gonna cry? Don't. I don't want to hear-*

(The girl releases Helen and the voice  
 dissipates.)

GIRL

Okay.

(Beat)  
I'm sorry.

HELEN  
No. No, baby-

GIRL  
I am.

HELEN  
I know. Mommy knows. It's... It's okay.  
(She recomposes herself.)  
I- I think I'm going to go lay down.

GIRL  
Okay.

HELEN  
We'll go out later. Get some fresh air. Does that  
sound good?

GIRL  
Okay.  
(Helen turns to go.)  
Thank you, Mom.

HELEN  
Always, baby.

(Helen exits deeper into the house.)

VOICE  
(calling)  
*Baby...*

(The girl looks around, shrugs it off, and  
wanders off into the clutter. The lights  
flicker ominously.)

## SCENE 5

*Late at night.*

*HELEN lays amongst the clutter asleep.*

*The girl appears from behind some of the clutter. She yawns, sighs, and sits amongst the clutter.*

*Suddenly the lights flicker.*

VOICE

*(calling)*

*Baby... Baby girl...*

GIRL

Mom?

*(The lights continue to flicker with growing intensity.)*

VOICE

*(crooning)*

*There's a somebody I'm longin' to see...*

GIRL

Who's there?

VOICE

*I hope that she turns out to be...*

GIRL

Show yourself!

VOICE

*Someone who'll watch over me...*

*(The lights settle and pool on HELEN in another part of the space. When did she move? Something seems off. She seems younger.)*

GIRL

Mom?

HELEN

*(ignoring her)*

Sing it again, Momma.

VOICE

(sighing)  
*Not tonight, baby.*

HELEN

Awww...

VOICE

*Momma's tired, sweetheart.*

HELEN

Please?

VOICE

*I said-*

HELEN

(Singing:)  
*I'm a little lamb who's lost in the wood.*  
 (A beat)  
*C'mon Momma. Pleeaaaaasse?*  
 (Singing:)  
*I know I could always be-*

VOICE

*That's enough! Time for bed.*

HELEN

But-

VOICE

*Not. Another. Word.*  
 (muttering)  
*Christ. What did I do to deserve this?*

HELEN

I'm sorry Momma...

(The voice doesn't respond. We hear the  
 sound of a door slamming shut. The light on  
 Helen goes out.)

GIRL

Mom?

(The lights begin to flicker again.)

VOICE

(from elsewhere)

*Baby...*

(The girl whirls around trying to locate the voice. An eerie light focuses on an old sewing machine in the clutter. The girl feels drawn to it. She reaches out to touch it.)

VOICE

*You're not supposed to touch things that don't belong to you.*

GIRL

Who said that?

VOICE

*How many times have we had this conversation?*

GIRL

None...?

VOICE

*Don't take that tone of voice with me.*

(Something dark and deep reverberates through the space. The girl shudders.)

VOICE

(softer)

*I'm sorry, baby, Momma didn't mean to scare you.*

GIRL

I'm not scared.

VOICE

*Good girl.*

(The light on the sewing machine goes out. The girl looks around warily. Another eerie light pops up in another part of the clutter: an old ratty wedding dress with the veil hanging loosely nearby. The girl maintains her distance.)

VOICE

*Do you like it?*

GIRL

*Mmm.*

VOICE

*Try it on.**(The girl doesn't move.)**Try. It. On.**(The girl is suddenly being forced to move toward the dress.)*

GIRL

*No. I don't- I don't want to.*

VOICE

*You're such an ungrateful little brat!**(The girl is pushed to the floor.)*

VOICE

*(coddlingly)**Aww, baby, what happened? Are you okay?*

GIRL

*Mom!*

VOICE

*You need to be more careful. There's so many pointy edges around here. Don't want you to get hurt.**(The girl tries to run off deeper into the house, but is stopped by Helen, carrying a large glass of something. The same weirdness from before lingers on her, but she seems a little more her age.)*

HELEN

*Mother.**(No response.)**Mother, I've brought you dinner.*

VOICE

*I'm not hungry.*



HELEN

You need to-

VOICE

*I told you I'm not-*

HELEN

You're gonna drink this. Even if I have to force you.

(Helen marches behind some clutter. We hear the sounds of the struggle followed by the voice hacking. It continues. We hear Helen shush it. We hear it gasping for air and it's unintelligible cries growing weaker. Eventually it is quiet. Helen emerges from behind the clutter. Her face is stone.)

GIRL

Mom?!

(Another reverberation of something dark and deep. It knocks the girl off balance. Helen vanishes. The girl steadies herself.)

GIRL (Continued)

Whoever you are... this isn't funny!

(There is sound of movement in the clutter. The girl whirls around. A silhouette of a woman framed against the clutter stands before her.)

GIRL (Continued)

Cut it out!

(The silhouette points. Another eerie light pools on Helen's laptop, still on the dinner tray. The girl refuses. The silhouette becomes even more insistent.)

VOICE

*Come here, baby. You don't wanna make Momma upset do you?*

GIRL

I don't-

VOICE

*Come. Here.*

(The girl steps closer.)

*There you go sweetheart.*

(The girl approaches the laptop. The silhouette looms over her.)

VOICE

*Sit down, baby.*

(The girl reluctantly sits. The lights flicker as the laptop is suddenly alive.)

VOICE

*Don't look away.*

(The girl is suddenly transfixed as we begin to hear Helen's search history from before mixing with the sounds of her spell. Webpages of dating profiles and sperm bank locations and occult rituals flash across the space. Another reverberation of something dark and deep. The girl begins to react to it. The other sounds die down and we hear the sounds of physical punishment and Helen crying. She appears cowering amidst the clutter.)

HELEN

I hate you! I hate you! I hate you.

(The loud sound of a smack.)

VOICE

*Shut up.*

HELEN

You're a monster!

(A moment. Helen reacts as if the voice has leaned down to get on her level.)

VOICE

*If I am... so. Are. You.*

(Helen vanishes.)

VOICE

(to the Girl)

*Welcome to the family, baby girl.*

(The lights flicker violently and make an audible pop as they die. The girl contorts into a savage unnatural shape as she wrestles with all of the rage and desperation and trauma flowing through her. The voice echoes it's sentiments from before, egging the girl on as she struggles, willing her to just give in. There are faint flickers of that swirling mystical light. The girl can feel it.)

VOICE

*Come on, baby...*

GIRL

No!

(There is a flash of that mystical light as the girl breaks out of the twisted shape.)

VOICE

*Baby-*

GIRL (Continued)

That's not me. I don't want that to be me.

(Pause)

It won't be.

(The voice dissipates. The girl looks around uncertain that they have left. The mystical light swirls around the space. She feels it and follows it. Lights come up on EVELYN at her mother's gravesite. She carries a large bouquet of wildflowers. The girl watches Evelyn carefully set the flowers at the grave and spend a brief moment with her mother. Evelyn exits. The girl approaches. The flowers wither and droop. The girl frowns. She reaches out and picks a single cinquefoil from the bouquet.)

## ACT I

## SCENE 6

*The GIRL travels back and sits amongst considerably less clutter in Helen's space. She still has the cinquefoil in her hands. It's beginning to droop again.*

*HELEN, who is practically vibrating she's so thrilled, enters. She goes about tidying up the last of the things in her space. Every so often she spins or twirls. The girl seems to feel this, but tries to shrug it off as she focuses on the dying flower.*

*Eventually, Helen is so overcome with her joy that she twirls all around and almost falls as a giddy fit of laughter overtakes her.*

GIRL

Mom.

*(Helen calms herself, but bursts into another fit of laughter.)*

GIRL (Continued)

Too loud.

HELEN

I'm sorry, baby girl. Mommy can't help herself. She's happy.

GIRL

I know.

HELEN

I want to dance and sing and-

GIRL

I know.

HELEN

Oooh! I know. Let me get some music.

*(Helen begins searching through the clutter.)*

GIRL

Mom.

HELEN

I know it's around here somewhere.

(She finds what she's looking for.)

Ah hah!

(She pulls out an old record player from the clutter.)

Here we go.

GIRL

Looks old.

HELEN

Refined, baby girl.

(Helen pulls out a record sleeve sending dust flying everywhere.)

GIRL

Classy.

HELEN

I haven't played anything in awhile. Haven't had much reason to celebrate until now.

(She puts on the record player.)

Dance with me.

GIRL

No thanks.

HELEN

Aww come on. I think this could be our song.

(Beat)

You know you want to.

GIRL

I don't-

(Helen reaches out and pulls the girl to her feet. She spins the girl around. The girl laughs in spite of herself.)

GIRL (Continued)

Cut it out!

HELEN

Not till I have this dance.

(She spins the girl again. The girl laughs some more. She relents and the two start to dance. They lose themselves in dizzying fun. At some point the flower slips out of the girl's hand and gets trampled. The girl feels this deep down in her bones and stops dead in her tracks. She stares at the flower. It takes a moment for Helen to notice.)

HELEN

What's the matter baby girl?

GIRL

...

HELEN

Do you not like this song?

(She turns off the record player.)

Hey, look at me. Talk to Mommy.

GIRL

...

HELEN

I can't make things better if I don't-

GIRL

Something's wrong.

HELEN

Okay... Okay. Can you-

GIRL

You're happy, but I... I don't feel good.

HELEN

Oh baby... That's all right. It happens. You know... Sometimes Mommy gets sad too. I used to be very-

GIRL

I know.

HELEN

Sorry?

GIRL

I said I know.

(Beat)

It's cause I'm not supposed to be here.

HELEN

Don't say that.

GIRL

But Mom-

HELEN

Don't say that!

GIRL

...

HELEN

If you weren't supposed to be here I wouldn't have been able to bring-

GIRL

The spell didn't-

HELEN

If it was impossible it wouldn't have worked. But it did. And now... Now you don't have to think about that anymore, baby girl.

GIRL

It's still a part of me.

HELEN

No. No. It's in the past. It can't hurt you. It can't hurt us.

GIRL

It might.

HELEN

No. Nonononono. No it won't.

GIRL

But it-

HELEN

(explosively)

I won't let it!

(The girl flinches. Helen backs away uncertainly.)

HELEN (Continued)

I'm sorry.

GIRL

It's okay.

HELEN

I didn't mean to scare you.

GIRL

You didn't-

HELEN

You just have to understand. Mommy... Mommy went through a lot to bring you back. Because I love you. So very much, baby girl. And when you talk like that... Mommy just...

(Beat)

Let's... Talk about something else. Do something else. Should I put on some different music? How about that?

(Helen digs through the clutter for another record.)

GIRL

Okay...

(The girl retrieves the trampled cinquefoil from the floor and retreats to her spot amongst the clutter. She gingerly touches the bruised petals and a flickering of that mystical light draws her focus over to EVELYN, once again at the gravesite.)

EVELYN

I can't stay for very long. I'm sorry. I just... Really needed to see you. Even if only for a moment.

(Beat)

I've not been feeling very well lately. I- I scheduled an appointment for a check up and... Mom. I'm pregnant.

(Beat)

I know you would never say "I told you so" but- You were right. It really wasn't worth it.



(Beat)

I'm fine. I'm going to be fine. I made an appointment. They're gonna make me take some forms home after this next one and... Think on it. Just for twenty-four hours.

(She sighs.)

It feels like all I'm doing is waiting.

(Beat)

I know it's going to be fine, but... I wish you were here. I wish we could talk about this. Like really talk.

(No response. She sighs.)

Okay, well...

(Beat)

See you soon. I love you.

(Evelyn turns to leave. The girl sighs and returns her attention the flower. She begins to hum the Gershwins' *Someone to Watch Over Me* to herself and suddenly the flower in her hand and the flowers at the grave begin to stiltedly rise back to life. The girl notices and her breath catches. Evelyn senses this and looks back at gravestone. The flowers stay standing for a moment before drooping again. Evelyn exits. The girl looks at the flower curiously. Helen re-enters with a new record.)

HELEN

Here we are. Let's try-

GIRL

Mom?

HELEN

Yes, baby?

GIRL

What do you do when someone is lonely?

HELEN

I- I don't think I understand... Do you feel-

GIRL

There's someone I know who's lonely. I don't think she has anyone... Besides herself.

HELEN

I don't know where this is coming from, but-

GIRL

Don't be angry, Mom.

HELEN

Excuse me?

GIRL

You're getting mad.

HELEN

I am not-

GIRL

Don't be angry.

HELEN

I- I will... Do my best. Okay?

GIRL

Okay.

HELEN

Okay.

GIRL

She's terribly lonely. Spends a lot of time at a graveyard talking to herself. She has such sad eyes, Mom.

HELEN

Who is this, exactly?

GIRL

I don't know.

HELEN

How do you know her?

GIRL

I said I-

HELEN

Don't lie to me. Who is-

GIRL

Momma.

(Pause.)

HELEN

No, baby, I think you're confused.

GIRL

No, I- I think. I don't know. I just want her to feel okay and-

HELEN

No. I'm you're Momma.

GIRL

Uh-uh. She's Momma. You're Mom.

HELEN

I don't-

GIRL

She's pregnant.

HELEN

But I- You said-

GIRL

No. I didn't.

HELEN

But the spell worked! It's not what I intended to happen but I'm-

GIRL

Mom. You're not pregnant.

HELEN

I...

GIRL

I'm sorry-

VOICE

(crashing in)

*Unacceptable! You're just a selfish little brat!*

HELEN

(overlapping)

This is ridiculous! I'm the one who- I birthed you. I brought you back from the edge. You wouldn't be- No.

(Beat)

No. Do you hear me? No! I'm your Momma. Me.

(The girl cowers.)

VOICE

*What am I supposed to do with you?*

(Helen shudders rigidly. She looks from the girl down to herself. She is instantly ashamed.)

HELEN (Continued)

Baby girl, I- I... I shouldn't have raised my voice. I'm-

GIRL

I didn't do it. I didn't do anything.

HELEN

I know. I'm sorry.

GIRL

...

HELEN

I am.

(Beat)

Look at me.

GIRL

I don't want to.

HELEN

Mommy just... She's tried so hard and to- to know that I've still not... It's just a lot for Mommy to process. I'll try harder to be better. For you. Okay?

GIRL

...Okay.

HELEN

All right.

(Beat)

So....

(She digs through the clutter and procures  
an old napkin and a pen.)  
So you don't know who she is... Just that she's  
lonely.

GIRL

Mhmm.

HELEN

What does she look like?  
(The girl shrugs.)  
Is she young? Old?

GIRL

I dunno.

HELEN

Details, baby, I need to have something to go on.

GIRL

I told you. She's lonely. She visits a graveyard and  
talks to her mom.

HELEN

Her mom?

GIRL

Yeah. She misses her.

HELEN

Okay. That! Tell me more about that.

GIRL

Ummm... She wants her help.

HELEN

With what?

GIRL

(shrugging)  
Everything?

HELEN

Okay okay, what else?

GIRL

She doesn't want to be a momma. I think.

HELEN

She doesn't- What does that even-

GIRL

She's really stressed. She wants her mom to help her make a decision.

(Helen freezes.)

VOICE

(echoing)

*What am I supposed to do with you?*

HELEN

W-what?

GIRL

She has an appointment-

HELEN

She's not going to get rid of- No. That's not- She can't-

(Helen looks around for something to stabilize herself. She catches her balance on the collapsible TV dinner tray. She takes a breath.)

HELEN (Continued)

No. I won't allow it. I won't.

(Something clicks for Helen. She opens the laptop on the tray and begins to search.)

GIRL

Mom?

HELEN

Don't worry, baby girl. Momma's gonna take care of it.

(Helen dives back into her search. The girl shrugs and returns to her spot and goes back to fiddling with the cinquefoil. As Helen works, we hear her chanting echoing around the space: *Lost and found. Found and lost. What has been lost shall now be found.* It builds and projections of locator spells and maps and crystals and the like begin to

flood into the space. Lights go up one by one in a pattern connecting Helen's space to EVELYN, now dressed in a cap and gown. Evelyn takes a few selfies and posts one. As she does, we hear a ding and Helen clicks, projecting a webpage of Evelyn's social media. A caption: *Miss you Mom. Wish you could see me walk this weekend.* Helen looks up in disbelief. She looks to the girl and then back to the photo. She swallows her thoughts and makes herself determined.)

HELEN

(to herself)

She misses her Momma? Well, I'll give her a Momma.  
I'll give her the Momma she wishes she always had...

(She begins to dig through the clutter.)

## SCENE 7

*The sounds of rain.*

*The GIRL sits with her back against the tombstone, the flowers, now wilted and withered, rest in her lap.*

*EVELYN stands holding an umbrella in the crook of her arm.*

EVELYN

Hi... Umm... Yeah.

(She exhales deeply.)

I'm sorry. I planned everything that I wanted to say on the drive down. I made little notecards when I stopped to get lunch. I wanted this to be... Well, it was never going to be perfect, but I- I wanted you to think I had my life together. Because I- Shit. Sorry. That's not why I came here today. I... Let me start over.

(Beat)

Hi. Hello. It's...

(She groans. It doesn't make her feel better. She groans again, but longer and louder and with all of her body.)

Where are the words? You know, I scratched out ninety percent of what I wrote down earlier. I thought if I wrote something down this time I'd have an easier time talking about everything, but- I don't know.

(Beat)

I graduated. Cum Laude. All of that money we didn't have for it... It became something. Your daughter is now Bachelor of Arts. Journalism. I did it. I- I have a job. Not in my field, unfortunately. I know, I know. I'm gonna start using it, but things have been... It's complicated. I applied for internships and entry-level work. I didn't get in anywhere I applied. Because- There's- Never mind. The point is I have a job... I can pay my bills and I'll still have a little left over. It's not a lot extra but- It works... I can save that for when student loans start up... I don't like this job, Mom. I really don't, but you never really liked yours either so... I don't know. You made it work. I will too. It's a start. A stepping stone to something bigger and better.



(Beat)

There's something else. I...

(The girl holds the flowers up. She hums a little bit of the Gershwins' *Someone to Watch Over Me*. The flowers begin to reluctantly rise. Evelyn notices. She rubs her eyes.)

EVELYN (Continued)

You... You probably already know in some way. I was having a bad day. Like... A very bad day. And I did what I always do when I have a day like that. I went to Spoonful of Love... That coffee shop. The one you always wanted to go to when you came to- I ordered a giant hot chocolate with all the fixings and I-

(She shifts uncomfortably. She looks everywhere but at the grave.)

But you... You must have sensed that wherever you are. Because this woman came up to me while I was sitting there. She saw me and knew. She knew I was scared and alone and had so many different voices in my head trying to tell me what I should be doing. She told me not to worry about whatever was bogging me down. She made laugh for the first time in far too long. And she told me I was sweet. Like honeysuckle...

(A light comes up on HELEN, all done up in makeup and a floral pattern dress. She looks like a woman who has had a much happier life. A woman who sleeps well at night. A woman who's closest interaction with magic was watching *Charmed* when it was still on the air. The girl continues to hum. The flowers rise fully to life.)

EVELYN (Continued)

I don't know if- I mean-

(She sighs. There are no words. The rain falls.)

## SCENE 8

*Two chairs and a small circular table appear in a separate space. The ambient noise of a small, chic, and slightly hipster coffee shop.*

*HELEN, still dressed up and lively, sits at the table. She has two large coffee mugs set up at the table.*

*EVELYN enters. As soon as Helen sees her, she jumps to her feet.*

HELEN

Evelyn, darling!

EVELYN

Helen... Hi!

HELEN

It's good to see you again.

EVELYN

It's good to see you too. You're here early today.

HELEN

I got done with work a little sooner than expected so I popped on over. Here! Sit, sit!

EVELYN

I should get my-

HELEN

I got yours for you already.

EVELYN

Oh, Helen. I couldn't possibly-

HELEN

Here you go. Peach Dream tea with two packets of honey, stirred, with some ice cubes to cool it down.

EVELYN

You really didn't have to-

HELEN

Please. I'm happy to treat you, sweet girl.  
(A thought)

Or did you want your semi-sweet three pump vanilla hot chocolate with extra whipped cream?

EVELYN

No! That's not- This is great.

HELEN

Are you sure? I don't mind. Really.

EVELYN

That's very sweet, but the tea is good. I should probably be watching my sugar intake anyway. Thank you though. I really appreciate this.

HELEN

You are ever so welcome.

(Evelyn sits and takes a sip. A sigh.)

HELEN (Continued)

Good?

EVELYN

It's perfect, Helen. Thank you. How's your day going?

HELEN

Wonderfully! And yours?

EVELYN

I'm feeling a lot better today. I actually slept last night. Woke up before my alarm, even. You were totally right. Taking fifteen minutes out of my day and a few dollars here and there to just breathe and drink some tea... And those breathing exercises you mentioned are just- I haven't felt so relaxed in months.

HELEN

Happiness!

EVELYN

If only you had been around during finals week. I swear I was about to go mad looking over all of those final papers and projects.

HELEN

Journalism, right?

EVELYN

Yeah. Did I-

HELEN

That's wonderful. I'm sure you know what they say about arts degrees, but journalism. That's a *good* major. I'm sure you'll find work in your field in no time at all.

EVELYN

I hope so. If only there were breathing exercises to help you land a job.

HELEN

Give it time. It's all a matter of perspective. And think about it this way: You'll get a job you love soon and then you can go back to all your little friends still in school and pass on my little nuggets of wisdom.

EVELYN

Yeah... Yeah. I can.

HELEN

I'm so glad it's all working out for you.

EVELYN

Don't get me wrong. I still don't know how I am going to make this work with the baby-

HELEN

You will figure it out, my dear. I know you will. You're a very smart young woman. Very articulate.

EVELYN

...

HELEN

And so gorgeous! Your skin is just so beautiful. It's stunning really.

EVELYN

I... Thank you, Helen. I don't know what to say-

HELEN

You don't have to say anything, darling. Just take the compliment!

EVELYN

I guess I'm just not used to anyone-

HELEN

No! Evelyn, sweetheart. That can't be true. You're such a beautiful girl. So... Exotic.

EVELYN

Okay, that's really not a compliment.

HELEN

Oh. Oh no. Evelyn, I- I am so sorry. I didn't mean to- It doesn't... It doesn't matter what I meant. I recognize that. And I truly apologize.

(Beat)

Truly.

EVELYN

I-

HELEN

And thank you for calling me on that. I'm sure that's never easy.

EVELYN

Right.

HELEN

You don't have to forgive me now. It's okay if it takes you some time. I understand.

(Beat)

Here. I'll get out of your-

EVELYN

No. You don't have to- It was a mistake, right?

HELEN

Absolutely.

EVELYN

I'm probably just... Extra sensitive right now anyway. I've been so overwhelmed.

HELEN

Rightfully so! You're in such a difficult portion of life right now, but it will all work out.

EVELYN

I hope so.

HELEN

It will.

(Helen pulls away.)

I hope you don't mind me, darling. I promise I'm not trying to pry, but I've been thinking an awful lot about you lately. I worry about you.

EVELYN

Oh Helen, you don't have to-

HELEN

But I do. It's what made me approach you in the first place. And I just hope you know that you have players in your corner. I'm in your corner. I know you probably have your parents and friends and- All I'm trying to say is that if you ever need to talk... You can talk to me. This is a no judgement zone. Always has been. Always will be.

(Helen pretends to get a text. She checks her phone.)

HELEN (Continued)

Oh my... I hate to cut our little get-together so short, but that's one of my clients now. Poor thing just got told she might need to have a cesarian birth and-

EVELYN

A cesarian?

HELEN

I think it's typically referred to as a slash-and-splash.

(She shudders.)

Dreadful name. It's a c-section, my dear.

EVELYN

I- I know. I just... I didn't realize you were a doctor.

HELEN

A doctor? Oh heavens no, my dear. I'm a midwife. I specialize in home births.

EVELYN

Home birth? People still do that?

HELEN

Definitely! There are so many complications that can occur in a hospital, especially for women. Black women in particular are four times as likely to die due to complications during their pregnancy. It's horrible. But, of course, those doctors don't want you to know about any of that. I'm not surprised they didn't mention it to you.

EVELYN

I could hardly get my nurses to listen to me when I went in for my appointment.

HELEN

Oh nurses! Too busy being the unrecognized worker bees of medicine and sleep-deprived to be empathetic.

(Beat)

I'll have you know that many women choose home birth. It's a very *cost-effective* option. I mean it costs so much to have a baby in a hospital nowadays and the medical "professionals" can be so... Impersonal. If you ask me, they're the ones being unorthodox.

EVELYN

Is there any risk?

HELEN

Hardly any. With the proper help, of course.

EVELYN

I had no idea.

HELEN

See that's exactly why I'm in the profession in the first place. I listen to my clients. I make sure that they feel heard so they can make the best decision for-

(Helen fakes another text.)

HELEN (Continued)

Oh... Poor Julia. She's so terribly upset. I should get over there and assess-

EVELYN

Helen?

HELEN

Yes, dear?

EVELYN

I- I know this is probably urgent and- and, of course, we can discuss it more later, but- Could I talk to you about your services?

HELEN

Of course, my dear! Of course. I'd be more than happy to talk to you. And I can put you in touch with some of my most recent clients. Here, let me find a few numbers.

(She starts to fiddle with her phone.)

Oh come on. My phone always does this just before- Ugh. And now it's dead. Technology. I can't stand it sometimes. Let me see if I brought a charger-

EVELYN

Don't be ridiculous! You have a client waiting. You can give them to me another time.

HELEN

Of course. Of course. I should-

(She starts to go, stops, pulls out a card from her purse and hands it to Evelyn.)

Here. My card. Call me whenever you want and we can chat more, okay?

EVELYN

Thank you, Helen. I will.

HELEN

Marvelous!

(She exits.)



## SCENE 9

*The countdown on the walls in Helen's space ticks down.*

*5 Months. 22 Weeks. 154 Days.*

*The GIRL sits with her back against the tombstone. EVELYN enters. She looks more certain of herself.*

EVELYN

I don't know how to say this so I'm- I'm just gonna say it, okay? Okay... Mom? I'm still pregnant. I know- I had an appointment at Planned Parenthood- I marched down there and I got the paperwork and I started to fill it out despite the constant voice telling me to consider my options. I was shaking. Like I used to every first day of school right before I had to get in the car. I couldn't even hold the pen steady! The nurse was nice enough to let me take the forms home. She told me to breathe and go somewhere less... Internally chaotic. That's why I went to Spoonful of Love. I went there and I ordered my giant hot chocolate with all the fixings and I started to fill out those forms.

(Beat)

That's when Helen came in. The woman I told you about? She- Yes... Her name is Helen. She's a white woman. I know what you're probably thinking, but- She's good. A little... Problematic, maybe, but she means well. She does. She saw me sitting there that day just... drowning. I'm sure to anyone else it looked like any other student with summer work, but she saw me and knew. And since that day she's been here for me. On every front. She's made me feel... Beautiful and confident and... Like there's a place for me and this baby. She's been so supportive. And... she's going to deliver your grandchild.

(The girl turns to look at Evelyn. She stands up.)

EVELYN (Continued)

I'm sorry I've kept this from you. I didn't want to I just- I didn't know how to tell you because I didn't want to let you down... Again. And I know if you were

here you'd be saying I didn't, but I did. I should have taken a semester off. I should have been there for you. I should have... I'm going to make it right. And I'm gonna be okay, Mom. I don't know if you ever worried growing up, but I'm telling you that I'm gonna have this baby. And I won't be miserable. I promise you. It's going to be better this time. For you... And for me. For this little girl. Because she deserves that much.

(The girl is overcome. She runs to Evelyn and wraps her in a hug. Evelyn is surprised initially, but soon wraps her arms around the girl.)

## SCENE 10

*HELEN moves about her space, which has accumulated additional clutter: maps and new clothes and magazines and legal documents. She pulls out a rolling dress form with another beautiful floral dress and a mannequin head bearing a stylish wig. She dances with them.*

*She does not notice the GIRL amidst the clutter. The girl ignores Helen. She sniffles. She scrunches her nose.*

GIRL

Mom?

*(Helen freezes. The girl stands.)*

GIRL (Continued)

What are you doing?

HELEN

I- Nothing. Nothing, baby girl. Just... Dancing.

*(She laughs.)*

I guess I got a little carried away.

GIRL

Uh-huh...

HELEN

I haven't been able to feel you as closely recently, baby girl.

GIRL

Uh-huh...

*(The girl starts to wander throughout the clutter. She sniffles again.)*

HELEN

I'm sorry things are a little more... Cluttered than usual. I haven't had much time to clean-

GIRL

Where did this all come from?

HELEN

Somewhere. I don't really remember-

GIRL

It's all new.

HELEN

Nonsense.

GIRL

It is. You've been leaving the house. I thought you didn't like leaving the house.

HELEN

Uh... Normally, I don't, but with you on the way and-

(The girl pulls out a map with a large circle on it.)

GIRL

This is... This is where she lives? Where Momma-

HELEN

I'm your Momma.

GIRL

She's Momma.

HELEN

No! I am! I'm-

(The girl backs away. Helen recoils.)

HELEN (Continued)

I mean... I'm your *real* Momma.

(Beat)

Baby girl, why don't you let Momma clean up a little. It's such a mess in here. I need time to make things ready for you to be here.

(The girl sniffles again. She looks around, approaches a pile of clutter, and pulls out the body of the fetus from the clutter. She stares at it, frozen and horrified. Helen immediately takes it from her. The girl distances herself in a flash.)

GIRL

Why do you still have that?

HELEN

It's not what it looks like-

GIRL

But that's- It's- No.

HELEN

It's all I have, baby girl. I just wanted to hold you-

GIRL

That's not me.

HELEN

Baby girl- You have to understand. I haven't had anything for a very long time. My mother- Well... Let's just say my mother had her ways and they've kept me very lonely. So- So I made you and... When I lost you I just... I needed something to hold onto.

GIRL

This is crazy.

HELEN

No! Please don't say that. I- I- I don't want to lose you again.

GIRL

I'm not lost.

HELEN

You might as well be.

GIRL

I'm with Evelyn.

HELEN

I know. And it pains me, baby girl. It pains me because she- People like her can't- They...

GIRL

People like her?

HELEN

She doesn't want you. But I do. I love you. So very much.

GIRL

I love Evelyn.

HELEN

Does she love you?

GIRL

She does.

HELEN

Truly? Or does she think she might? Because let me tell you, a good mother knows. She feels it right down to the marrow in her bones.

GIRL

She does!

(There is a much stronger rumble of something dark and deep. Helen and the girl look around. What is this? The girl swallows her fear.)

GIRL (Continued)

I know she does.

HELEN

I ripped apart Heaven and Hell to bring you back and I- I stopped her from undoing everything I've done for you.

(Beat)

I'm the one who really loves you. I've always loved you.

GIRL

You have a funny way of showing it.

HELEN

I... I'm sorry things have had to be this way. This isn't what I wanted for you. But every day I'm working to fix that. Momma's going to make everything okay again.

GIRL

You mean that? You really mean that?

HELEN

Of course, baby girl. With all of my heart. I'll take care of it all. For you.

(Helen goes to the fetus. She picks it up and exits. A pause. She re-enters.)

GIRL

Mom?

HELEN

Hmm?

GIRL

What's my name?

HELEN

I- I don't-

(That rumbling bursts forth as everything everything becomes enveloped in a blood red light. Helen suddenly reacts as if being choked. The girl twitches and shakes as if possessed by the darkness.)

GIRL

You don't have one?

HELEN

No. You don't understand-

GIRL

Don't lie to me!

HELEN

I'm not! I don't have one, but- That doesn't mean I- I named all five of your siblings. And they- I decided I wasn't going to give you a name until you were mine. Actually mine.

(At this moment we see EVELYN in her space. She's just returned home from visiting her mother's grave. She sets her things down and suddenly feels a kick from the baby. Her hand lands on her stomach and she suddenly locks eyes with the girl. A cool light shines in on them both, piercing the red. The girl looks around from Helen's space to herself to Evelyn. She takes in a deep breath. As she exhales the red begins to

fade away. Helen reacts as if let go,  
gasping for air.)

GIRL

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to-

HELEN

It's- It's fine.

GIRL

No. I- I don't want to hurt anyone.

HELEN

Baby girl-

GIRL

I- I don't want to be like you.

(The girl runs out of Helen's space and  
vanishes. Helen reaches for the girl, but  
she's gone.)

HELEN

No!

VOICE

(creeping in)

*It's only going to get worse if you don't listen.*

(Helen winces.)

VOICE

*Breathe. There you go...*

(Helen takes a shaky breath. The sound of a  
baby crying fills the space.)

VOICE

*Don't look.*

(Helen opens her eyes. A moment. She opens  
her arms hopefully.)

VOICE

*What did I say? NO! Don't you listen? Just forget  
about this. All of this.*



HELEN

But-

VOICE

*As far as you're concerned? This little girl... She doesn't exist. Momma's going to take care of it.*

(A sob tears through Helen.)

HELEN (Continued)

Why couldn't Momma hold baby girl? Baby girl was just too- Did baby girl love her Momma? Momma knows she did not. Did Momma love her baby girl? YES. YOU HEAR ME? YES! Momma loved her baby girl. But baby girl did not love Momma. Baby girl was just too-

(A venomous idea. Helen opens her laptop. We start to hear and see the faint whispers of all of her past search histories. Each word is a weapon being smelted down and forged into something new. She types: Spell to bind supernatural energy. She starts digging through the results, opening myriad tabs. The whispers of her search histories fade. The GIRL appears in Evelyn's space. She wraps Evelyn in a hug. Evelyn is surprised, but wraps her arms around the girl. She pulls her away and looks at her. Perhaps Evelyn strokes her hair, or some other tender gesture. A moment. Then Helen starts to hum the Gershwins' *Someone to Watch Over Me* as she searches. Lights fade on Evelyn and the girl before everything goes to black.)

## SCENE 11

*The countdown on the walls in Helen's space ticks down.*

*3 Months. 12 Weeks. 84 Days.*

*HELEN enters in her persona. She starts to pull items from the clutter in her space: an armful of paper grocery bags, towels galore, a motorized air pump, candles, incense, mixing bowls, water, syringes, a tarp, a very long hose, etc.*

*She makes several trips over to Evelyn's space and unpacks it all. A birthing pool appears in the space bordering Evelyn's and the Girl's. Helen assesses her handiwork and begins to hum the Gershwin's Someone to Watch Over Me as she places crystals around Evelyn's space.*

*The GIRL watches nearby.*

GIRL

I know that.

(Helen doesn't hear her.)

Mom.

HELEN

Huh? Oh! Yes, baby girl?

GIRL

I know that song.

HELEN

You do?

GIRL

Yeah.

HELEN

Ohmygoodness! Baby girl, that makes me so-

GIRL

You sing it an awful lot. Gets stuck in my head.

HELEN

Oh... Well, I...

GIRL

You don't know any other songs?

HELEN

I do.

GIRL

You don't sing them. It's always the same one.

HELEN

That one's- It's my favorite. Has been for as long as I can remember.

GIRL

Why?

HELEN

I... It just is, baby girl. I think it's pretty and it makes me feel safe.

GIRL

Did your Momma sing it to you?

(Helen almost laughs. She recomposes herself.)

HELEN

I'd rather not discuss my mother.

GIRL

Why not?

HELEN

It's complicated, baby girl. You wouldn't understand.

GIRL

I think I understand a whole lot.

HELEN

We can talk about it when you're older.

(Helen goes back to organizing the clutter. The girl shifts. We stew in their awkwardness. The girl can't stand it.)

GIRL

That's a lot of stuff.

HELEN

It's all necessary, baby girl. So you can be born.

EVELYN

(off-stage)

Helen?

HELEN

Yes, darling?

EVELYN

(off-stage)

Can I come back in yet?

HELEN

Oh! Of course, my sweet sweet honeysuckle! But close your eyes, please, I want to see your eyes light up when you see what I've done with the place!!

(EVELYN enters, covering her eyes with her hands. Helen joins her and guides her to the perfect vantage point to see how her home has been transformed.)

HELEN (Continued)

Okay. Open!

(Evelyn looks around the room, taking in the change with reluctant enthusiasm.)

EVELYN

Helen... Is the living room really the best place to set up?

HELEN

Not usually, darling, but there's some very nice feng shui here. Good juju. Everything in this room vibrates positively. Do you feel it?

EVELYN

I'm not quite sure I do.

HELEN

Oh. Well, darling, don't let it bother you a wink. This is not the first time I've had to explain my madness to a client.

EVELYN

I wouldn't necessarily call it madness.

HELEN

Oh, my dear. So sweet. So kind.

(She sort of titters. It's a little too strange even for her. She recomposes herself.)

HELEN (Continued)

Listen, I know my methods are a little... New age, to put it mildly, but I promise you that if you just follow my lead you won't be disappointed. Do you trust me?

EVELYN

O-of course, Helen.

(absorbing the room and herself)

This is all just a little overwhelming.

HELEN

Evelyn, my dear. Don't you fret. Not one single worry, all right?

(She sits Evelyn down.)

Are you okay? You look rather frazzled... Are you ill?

EVELYN

I-I'm fine.

HELEN

Goodness! I didn't get a good look at you when I first came in. You have bags under your eyes! Have you been sleeping all right?

EVELYN

Well, no, but-

HELEN

I can guide you through some meditation if you'd like. Now is most certainly not the time for you to stress, my dear.

EVELYN

That's really quite all right, Helen. You don't have to-

HELEN

Nonsense! It's my pleasure. Shall I grab some eye cream and a yoga mat? Maybe a massage?

GIRL

She said she's fine.

(Evelyn glances at the girl. Helen pretends not to notice.)

EVELYN

No. Thank you, but that's really not necessary.

(She takes another look around. Her eyes settle on the pool.)

EVELYN (Continued)

It's really happening.

HELEN

Only a couple of months, isn't it?

EVELYN

So the doctors say...

HELEN

You've still been going to the doctors?

EVELYN

Just every so often. When I can afford it.

HELEN

I'm sure those bills rack up quite quickly.

EVELYN

It's... not easy, sure, but I manage. I don't go very often.

HELEN

I see.

EVELYN

I did want to talk to you about my most recent appointment, actually.

HELEN

Oh?

EVELYN

Yeah. My doctor asked who was going to deliver the baby and- Well, when I told her your name she said she wasn't aware of anyone-

HELEN

I- I wouldn't be surprised. M-my license isn't local.

EVELYN

Don't you need a license in this state to-

HELEN

I'm still fairly new in town. You understand-

EVELYN

Didn't you say you had other clients already?

HELEN

Well, yes, but I- I...

EVELYN

What's wrong?

HELEN

Nothing! I'm wonderful, darling. I just... There's... so much *paperwork* involved. And waiting. The bureaucracy just kills me sometimes. I couldn't afford to just wait around for some piece of paper. I have to have a living, don't I?

EVELYN

Of course! I'm not saying-

HELEN

Right. Right. Right. Listen, my dear, you have nothing to worry about. I've done this for as long as I can remember. Picked it up from my mother, God rest her soul. You're in very capable hands.

(Beat)

I know it's all happening very quickly.

EVELYN

Yeah... It feels like the last few months have just-

HELEN

Flown by?

EVELYN

I just can hardly believe she'll be here so soon.

GIRL

Believe it.

HELEN

Are you sure you're doing well, my dear? I only ask because I worry about you. I know the prospect of motherhood only gets scarier as you face it down. You know I'm here for-

EVELYN

I feel confident, Helen.

(Beat)

I never thought I would say that, what with my rent-and all of these new baby bills... But I... I can say it now. And mean it.

(Evelyn looks over to the girl. Helen follows her gaze.)

HELEN

That's...

GIRL

Wonderful?

HELEN

...Pardon my reaction, my dear. I just- That's quite a remarkable change.

EVELYN

I know! Honestly, though, I think part of it is that I finally settled on a name: Melinda.

HELEN

I'm sorry?

EVELYN

Her name is Melinda.

(The girl stands as if claiming her name. From now on, she will be referred to as MELINDA.)

HELEN

Melinda...



EVELYN

For my mother.

HELEN

I... That's... Oh...

EVELYN

Is something wrong, Helen?

HELEN

No, no! Nothing, my dear. I- I'm delighted for you, such a- Oh my goodness! Before I forget, I brought you a little something. It's not much.

(She goes to her bag and retrieves a small jar of something that looks like petroleum jelly.)

HELEN (Continued)

Just a little homemade remedy. A little jar of miracles. For... Stretch marks, abdominal pain, headaches, congestion, fatigue. The works, my dear! It all depends on where you put it on your body. It's a lifesaver before, during, and after pregnancy. All natural, of course.

EVELYN

Umm... Thank you. That's so nice.

(Helen opens the jar. Melinda shudders, takes a shallow breath, then covers her mouth and nose. Evelyn looks her way.)

MELINDA

It smells funny.

HELEN

Would you like to try it, Evelyn?

EVELYN

I-I don't know. Maybe later?

HELEN

Nonsense. It's never too early to start using it.

(She applies some under Evelyn's eyes.)

This will help you get a good night's sleep. Fix those bags under your eyes.

(Melinda stumbles. The women don't notice.)

MELINDA

Momma—

HELEN

Take a deep breath. It'll work faster.

(Evelyn does so. Melinda takes another shallow breath.)

HELEN (Continued)

How does that feel?

EVELYN

I feel... Relaxed...?

HELEN

Happiness! That means it's working.

(Melinda collapses into the birthing pool.  
The women don't notice.)

EVELYN

Th-thank you, Helen. This is really so kind of you—

HELEN

No need to thank me, my dear.

(The lights go out on Melinda.)

HELEN (Continued)

I'm just doing my job.

(Lights fade.)

## SCENE 12

*The slightest hum of white noise.*

*MELINDA sits up in the birthing pool. She pushes against an invisible barrier that keeps her trapped inside but it won't budge. She gets up and pushes harder but is knocked back.*

*Melinda pulls herself up and tries to let out a groan, but no sound comes out. She lashes out ineffectually and the lights flicker red.*

*This sparks something for her. She goes to the center of the pool and focuses. The lights start to flicker more to that red and we hear the sound of glass under pressure. It builds and builds.*

*Then we see EVELYN trudge in looking uncomfortable and exhausted. Melinda seems rallied by her presence and the lights flicker more. The sound gets more intense.*

*Just when we think the barrier might be broken, Evelyn reaches for the jar of Helen's remedy. She applies it under her eyes and nose and takes a nice, long, deep breath.*

*The lights snap back to normal in an instant. Melinda gasps for breath and collapses. Evelyn sighs.*

## SCENE 13

*The countdown on the walls in Helen's space ticks down.*

*1 Month. 4 Weeks. 28 Days.*

*EVELYN sits in her space. She looks around as if expecting to feel Melinda's presence, but she does not.*

*Then one of the crystals Helen placed earlier catches her eye. She moves about, examining them and their placement. She stops at one. Just as she's about to reach out and touch it, HELEN enters carrying a tea tray bearing two large glasses of iced tea and plates loaded with scones and finger sandwiches, half of which are entirely vegetarian.*

HELEN

(as she enters)

Here we go, my darling honeysuckle: Afternoon tea that would make the Queen jealous!

EVELYN

Sounds great, Helen.

HELEN

Sit, sit.

(Helen sets the tray down. She looks to Evelyn expectantly.)

HELEN (Continued)

This is nice, right? Just a little rest and relaxation. Good food. I think this new Verde diet is really working for me.

(She picks up one of the vegetarian sandwiches and takes a bite.)

Mmmmmmm. So good. You really must try some, my dear.

EVELYN

I will. In a moment.

HELEN

Evelyn... Sweetheart... Is something the matter?

EVELYN

Uhh... No. I'm fine.

HELEN

Now, now. There's no lying to me, my dear. Something is eating you when frankly you should be the one eating. Come here, have a sandwich, and... What is it you kids are saying nowadays? Spill the tea?

(She chuckles. Evelyn does not find it funny.)

HELEN (Continued)

Evelyn? Talk to me. I'm here for-

EVELYN

Something feels different.

HELEN

Good different?

(Beat)

Bad different?

EVELYN

Neither. Just... Different.

HELEN

Well, that's natural, of course. Your body is changing rapidly in these last few months. Hormones and whatnot preparing you for the miracle of childbirth!

EVELYN

I guess...

HELEN

Don't think about it too hard. It's really nothing to worry about.

EVELYN

Sure, but- I don't know. This feels more... Personal.

HELEN

What could be more personal than bringing your sweet little Melinda into this world?

EVELYN

You're right. You're... Right. I don't know exactly how to put my finger on it.

HELEN

Okay, okay. I just want to remind you that this is a safe space. Anything you want to talk to me about is strictly confidential. Baby-related or otherwise.

(Evelyn looks at Helen. Something feels off, but she can't quite place it. She grabs a scone. She pops it in her mouth, chews, swallows. She grabs a finger sandwich and starts to devour it as well. She stops halfway through and sighs.)

EVELYN

You know I sometimes forget that I'm pregnant? Which is- I mean- How could I possibly forget something like that? I mean, look at me, I'm a whale!

HELEN

You're beautiful, my dear. You're glowing and radiant and healthy.

EVELYN

No. I feel like a whale. Just this big lumbering mass so out of touch with every bit of itself. I used to- I know this probably sounds terrible, but I- I don't even feel Melinda kick that much anymore.

(We start to hear the sound of a baby crying.)

EVELYN (Continued)

It's like she's sleeping all the time.

HELEN

It's not uncommon for babies to slow down a little before labor. Some of my other clients-

EVELYN

It feels so unnatural.

HELEN

Well, I... Pregnancy can be very-

(We start to hear the sound of someone shoveling hard ground. It disorients Helen.)

EVELYN

Helen?

HELEN

I- It's all just- Part of the process, you know.

(The sound of the shoveling stops. The crying starts to dwindle.)

EVELYN

No... I don't. I- I feel like I'm losing her.

(We hear a thud. Like a small bag of flour being dropped. The crying intensifies. Helen physically recoils. Suddenly the sound is gone.)

EVELYN (Continued)

Are... Are you alright?  
(No response.)

Helen?

HELEN

Don't. Please.

EVELYN

You're shaking.

HELEN

I'm fine. I- I'm not- I'm sorry. That thought... It's just- It's a sensitive topic for me, my dear.

EVELYN

What do you mean?

HELEN

I... I'd really rather not discuss it if that's all right with you.

EVELYN

O-okay. Yeah. That's fine. Forget I-

HELEN

Have you been keeping up with those exercises I told you about?

EVELYN

What do those-

HELEN

I feel like I could stand to do some of those right now. Perhaps you could too. All of these feelings... We're just feeding off of each other's stress.

EVELYN

I don't know. This doesn't feel like-

HELEN

We could probably do with a change of scenery too. I mean, we've been meeting here for so long now. I'd be more than happy to take a little trip to Spoonful of Love if you'd like. I can't remember the last time-

EVELYN

You know... You're right. It's funny I used to go there multiple times a week.

(Something dawns on her. She makes a face.)

HELEN

What?

EVELYN

I don't know. Nothing, I guess.

HELEN

Tell me.

EVELYN

I just... I don't really remember seeing you there before we met? I mean, I feel like I would remember you. You're... one of a kind.

(A moment. Helen forces a smile.)

HELEN

You are such a *sweet* girl.

(She touches Evelyn's hair and then cheek.)

To tell you the truth, I only started going there maybe a week or two before we met? It's such a cute little shop, but such a well-kept secret if you're not a student. Hardly notice it's there.

(She eyes the tray of food and the glasses of iced tea.)



You know what Evelyn? How about a nice cup of warm tea instead? Take the edge off. Can even put a little honey in it, just like you always get.

EVELYN

Uhh... Sure. That sounds good.

HELEN

Allow me-

EVELYN

Actually, I- I'll do it.

(Evelyn goes to exit, hesitates, and then exits. Helen sighs with her entire being. It doesn't release any tension in her. The sound of shoveling returns, this time a hole being filled. Helen tries to ignore it and reaches for the iced tea. She sips it, but the sound grows louder. She repositions herself to get more comfortable. The sound does not disperse.)

HELEN

No... Keep calm... It's okay. It's okay.

(She buries her head in her hands. Perhaps she even starts to curl up into a fetal position. Whatever it is, she sits wallowing in it for just long enough. Then the shovel hits the ground.)

VOICE

*It's done.*

HELEN

Everything is okay. Baby girl is okay.

(MELINDA appears. She stares straight ahead. Emotionless and stoic. Helen glances in her direction.)

HELEN (Continued)

She's okay. She is.

VOICE

*We don't have to worry about it anymore. Momma took care of it.*

HELEN

No...

VOICE

*Don't cry.*

(Melinda starts to choke. Helen averts her gaze.)

VOICE

*It's for the best. You know that.*

HELEN

She's okay.

VOICE

*It was only going to cause problems. Momma can't deal with any more problems.*

HELEN

She has to be.

(Melinda vanishes.)

HELEN (Continued)

Oh God!

EVELYN

(off-stage)

Helen?

(Beat)

Did you say something?

HELEN

N-nothing.

(She swallows and puts on her persona.)

Not a thing, my darling honeysuckle. Do you need my assistance?

EVELYN

(off-stage)

No. No, I've got it. I'll be right there.

(Helen sits up. She wipes her eyes. Tries to take a few breaths. As Evelyn enters with her cup of tea, Helen takes a scone and pops it in her mouth. She chews it and swallows harshly. Her face is steel.)

EVELYN

Are... Are you sure you're okay?

HELEN

I'm fine.

EVELYN

Is something-

HELEN

I said: I'm fine.

(Beat)

I'm sorry, Evelyn, dearie. I... I think I'm just... Really in tune with some negative energies right now. I'm-

(She make the motions of starting to cry.)

It happens. It's hard not to get emotionally overwhelmed in my line of work.

EVELYN

Oh no. I'm sorry. Did I-

HELEN

No. No. Don't let it bother you... I'll be fine.

(She steadies herself.)

Oh dear. Look at the time. I have to go meet with another client soon. I'm sorry to eat and run, my dear, but- Surely, you understand.

EVELYN

O-of course. Here. Let me grab you a bag so you can take some of this to go.

HELEN

That won't be necessary. Really. I'm not that hungry anymore.

EVELYN

Okay...

(Helen gets up to leave. She's a little bit more like herself than her persona as she moves. She forces it down.)

HELEN

Evelyn... You have nothing to worry about. Little Melinda is happy and healthy and... She's going to be perfect.

(She leaves without giving Evelyn a chance to respond.)

## SCENE 14

*In the darkness, we hear an audible POP.*

*Lights rise revealing it is, in fact, the witching hour.*

*The night of Melinda's birth.*

*EVELYN is in the middle of a contraction. She tries taking a few patterned breaths, but it does little to ease her discomfort. The contraction lasts far longer than a normal contraction.*

*Suddenly the sound of knocking at the door. HELEN enters in a whirlwind.*

HELEN

Evelyn! Evelyn, my dear, have no fear for I have arrived! You must be so very excited. Oh!

(She goes to Evelyn's side.)

Let's get you up.

EVELYN

Woah. Woah!

(Helen halts.)

I can't move that quickly, Helen.

HELEN

Of course, of course. Forgive me, my dear, I-

(Another contraction starts. Helen is a little lost.)

HELEN (Continued)

Evelyn, are you- Can I-

(Evelyn reaches for Helen's hand.)

Oh! Of course! Here you-

(Evelyn squeezes Helen's hand tight. Helen nearly shrieks.)

Ooooh! Evelyn. My darling honeysuckle. Let's try to avoid yanking my hands off. Don't want to take me out, do you?

EVELYN

I-I'm sorry.

HELEN

(an idea)

Let's try some deep breathing, okay? In. And out.

(She urges Evelyn to do so.)

In. And out. In...

EVELYN

And out.

HELEN

There you go, darling. Just like that!

(Beat)

Feel better?

EVELYN

Sort of.

HELEN

Marvelous. Now, like I said earlier, let's get you up and-

EVELYN

I- I don't-

(She moves into a more comfortable position.)

Do I need to get up right away?

HELEN

Oh yes. Wouldn't want you to get stuck now would we?

EVELYN

Of course not, but-

HELEN

Then let's get you up.

EVELYN

I just need a minute. Please.

HELEN

Fine.

(Beat)

How are you feeling, my dear?

EVELYN

I feel like my insides are on fire and it just keeps stretching- I don't know. Maybe we should go to the hospital?

HELEN

Little Melinda will be just fine. You're both in very capable hands.

EVELYN

What if something goes wrong?

HELEN

Nothing will go wrong. Besides, how could we possibly change our plans now? I mean, I don't exactly have a vehicle designed for your comfort in that situation, you know.

EVELYN

We could always take-

HELEN

And I don't want to be responsible for driving your car, especially this late at night. We'd have to call an ambulance!

EVELYN

If it was absolutely necessary-

HELEN

It'll be an awful lot of money, my dear.

EVELYN

I-

(Another contraction starts.)

Ow. Ow. Owowowowow.

HELEN

Deep breaths. In and out. Canoe on the river. Wave in the ocean.

EVELYN

This. Hurts.

HELEN

This is a thing of beauty! And beauty, my dear, is pain. Nothing in life comes free, beauty least of all.

(Evelyn shakes her head.)

T-this is the miracle of birth. Of bringing a child into this big... bright... beautiful world.

(She places her hands tenderly on Evelyn's stomach.)

Take a few more deep breaths with me.

(They do so. Evelyn rides the contraction out. Thankfully, this one is shorter than the previous two.)

EVELYN

This... This is all just- More intense than I expected it to be.

HELEN

Expectations can be like that, my dear. I suggest you enjoy this experience. As much as you can. Once little Melinda is here there's so many other things that can tear you to pieces. These contractions will be little more than a pothole in your rearview mirror.

EVELYN

You're right. Everything gets much harder from here on out.

VOICE

(creeping in)

*It's only going to get worse...*

HELEN

(to herself)

Indeed.

(Beat)

Are you feeling up to getting in the pool now?

EVELYN

I- I think so.

HELEN

Splendid! Here we go.

(Helen gets Evelyn up.)

EVELYN

I'm sure you don't rush out of your house at three in the morning like this for every client.



VOICE

*Always so needy.*

HELEN

Well, when duty calls...

EVELYN

I just can't imagine what I would do if you weren't-

VOICE

*What did I do to deserve this?*

HELEN

Say no more. I understand.

EVELYN

Did I say something wrong?

HELEN

I- No, my dear. I just- This is the part where things  
 start to get difficult for me and I'd appreciate the  
 ability to focus. Is that okay?

VOICE

*It better be.*

EVELYN

O-of course, Helen.

(re: her nightgown)

Should I take this off?

HELEN

No. Not yet.

(Helen helps Evelyn into the pool.)

VOICE

*How does it feel?*

HELEN

How does it feel?

EVELYN

Good...

HELEN

Is it warm enough for you? It should feel like a bath.

EVELYN

Mhmm. It does.

(Helen goes to the supplies along the pool's edge and procures a thermometer. She dips it in the water.)

HELEN  
Wonderful.

VOICE  
Wonderful.

HELEN  
94 degrees exactly.

(She returns the thermometer to the bag.)

HELEN (Continued)  
Dunk your head. Get used to the feeling of the water.  
You'll be in there for awhile.

EVELYN  
Okay.

(Evelyn lays back in the water and allows herself to float. Helen is shaking in her knees. She is so close. She tries to relax. Lights shift somewhere between the eerie, mystical look and something much more like the rest of the space. A weary MELINDA appears. She sees Evelyn in the water and struggles to crawl toward the pool. Helen doesn't notice. Melinda manages to get to Evelyn and rests a hand on her stomach. Evelyn sits up suddenly.)

EVELYN (Continued)  
Helen?

HELEN  
Yes, dear?

EVELYN  
I feel strange. Like I wanna run far far away. Like I need to get out of here.

HELEN  
Woah. Woah, my dear, calm down.

VOICE  
*Shhhhh...*

EVELYN

Don't tell me-

HELEN

I need you to relax, Evelyn.

EVELYN

I can't.

HELEN

You can. Just... Breathe.

VOICE

*Relaaaaaaxxx.*

(Evelyn looks to Melinda. They take a breath together. Evelyn can hardly believe her eyes.)

EVELYN

Helen... I've- Melinda. She's been here. Like a presence.

HELEN

I'm sure. In dreams, in the faces of other people's children-

EVELYN

No. That's not what I- She's been here. I know that's-

HELEN

I think you're just getting jittery. Please try to relax-

EVELYN

No.

MELINDA

No.

(Evelyn locks eyes with Melinda. She continues.)

EVELYN

I know you probably don't believe me, but she was here. I could feel her. At first I thought maybe I was just seeing signs from my mom, but- It was her. I could feel her on some other level.

HELEN

That's a delightful little story, Evelyn, dearie. You should write it down after Melinda is born.

EVELYN

It's not just a story. She was here. I used to feel her here every day. I-

(Melinda points to the jar of Helen's remedy.)

EVELYN (Continued)

Sorry I- Helen... What's in that jar you gave me?

VOICE

*It's none of your business.*

HELEN

I told you. It's a little homemade miracle-

EVELYN

What is it made out of?

VOICE

*Be quiet.*

HELEN

I- I can't tell you that.

EVELYN

Helen. I've been using it multiple times a day. I deserve to know-

VOICE

*Shut. Up.*

HELEN

It's an old family recipe. Totally natural. Why does it matter?

EVELYN

I stopped feeling Melinda after you gave me that jar.

HELEN

Evelyn, please! This little figment of Melinda you were sensing was probably just that: a figment. A piece of your imagination running wild from the

pregnancy. All of those hormones. She probably disappeared because the cream helped balance you out.

EVELYN

It's more than that.

HELEN

Evelyn, she hasn't gone anywhere-

EVELYN

You're right. She hasn't.

(She looks at Melinda and gently places her own hand on top of her daughter's.)

EVELYN (Continued)

I feel her again. Right now. She feels so... Weak. Like she's barely hanging on. Like she's...

HELEN

Poisoned.

VOICE

*Poisoned.*

(Evelyn tries to move, but another contraction starts. She cries out. Helen doesn't falter.)

HELEN

You heard me. Cat's practically jumping out of the bag, my dear. No use trying to pretend it drowned. I didn't mean to poison her, I meant to contain her.

EVELYN

Contain. Her?

HELEN

I didn't even think it would work, I mean- hodgepodging a potion from numerous different spells could have killed us both, but- She was so strong. Gets that from me, I suppose.

EVELYN

You- What?

HELEN

Oh, Evelyn. My sweet sweet honeysuckle. How little you know... I made her. I lost her. I brought her back. And then she fell in love with you and that...

(Helen approaches the pool.)

I couldn't live with myself if I lost her again. So I made that little potion to make sure she couldn't love you anymore. To make sure she couldn't ruin everything. And now? I'm taking back what's rightfully mine.

EVELYN

But- How did you-

HELEN

Oh please, Evelyn. Anyone who wants something badly enough can get it with a little effort.

(Helen steps into the pool and pushes Melinda away from them. Evelyn's contraction worsens. Melinda disappears.)

HELEN (Continued)

If I didn't know any better, I'd say you're about ready to start pushing.

EVELYN

Get. Away. From me.

HELEN

Don't fuss.

VOICE

*Don't fuss.*

(She places a firm grip on Evelyn.)

EVELYN

You can't. Have her.

HELEN

You can't stop the inevitable. She's coming, Evelyn, and then I'm taking her far, far away. That's it. The end.

EVELYN

I. Am her. Mother.

HELEN

Her mother? You think that you're qualified to be her mother. Why? Because you let me baby you and make you feel all confident when really you're just a sniveling little worm of a girl pretending she has her life together. You didn't want to be a mother. You didn't want anything to do with her. If it wasn't for me your

darling Melinda wouldn't even be here because *you* would have- But I- I've done *everything* for this little girl. Because I wanted her with every fiber of my being. You can't say the same. You just can't. Now... It's not how I pictured it and it's certainly not the way I wanted to experience it, but it's here. This moment... It's what I've been waiting for. This is when all of my blood and tears and anguish comes to an end. This is the moment I finally get to hold my baby girl. You are not her mother. I am.

(Beat)

Now. Push.

(Blackout.)

## EPILOGUE

*All is darkness.*

*We hear the sound of thrashing in the pool. Kicks and water flying every which way. Someone gasping and sputtering. It should make us sick to our stomachs.*

*A light comes up and it is not Evelyn or Helen, but MELINDA struggling as she did before. It grows wilder, more desperate.*

*Then suddenly all is still once more.*

*We wait.*

*And wait.*

*And wait.*

*Then suddenly she forces herself up. Gasping, sputtering, willing as much air into her lungs as possible yet unable to hold it.*

*She barely catches her breath as she absorbs her new surroundings.*

*She looks directly to us.*

*She opens her mouth to speak.*

*Blackout*

*End of Play.*