

# very still & hard to see

*a short play cycle*

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## List of Players:

<b>Obake</b>	a “woman” but more of a secret thing, striking, poised, polite and not at all what she appears  also <b>Mud Woman</b> , a ghost of love now made dirty and limp, but with a beautiful voice
<b>Buck</b>	a man, an architect used to giving orders and practiced at masking a hidden hunger  also <b>Shikigami 2</b> with glasses & pencil behind his ear  also <b>Canary</b> , a victim of physical abuse
<b>Ethan</b>	a man, Betty’s husband, handsome, but lots of sleepless nights and time to wander  also <b>Sam</b> , a pretty amiable boyfriend right to the end  also <b>Guest</b> , very weary and ready for bed
<b>Betty</b>	a woman with trouble sleeping and a need to clean  also <b>Kami 1</b> , quiet but full of anxiety and history  also <b>Violet</b> , a potential love interest
<b>Edith</b>	a woman, a nervous wife, still jovial in grappling with tragedy  also <b>Shikigami 1</b> , upbeat with glasses and a giant book  also <b>Punch</b> , demanding and oddly domestic
<b>Ginger</b>	a woman, caught between who she’d like to be and what she’s actually done - and still does  also <b>Kimberly</b> , a good girlfriend right to the end  also, <b>Simone</b> , a romantic, entrenched pill head
<b>Franklin</b>	a man, a bit sassy and very rule-oriented, unaware of his actions, or maybe aware – which would be worse  also, <b>Jasper</b> , a bit of a third wheel in the wrong room
<b>David</b>	a man, Simone’s husband, no fan of attention, but patiently doing his best  also <b>Kami 2</b> , quiet but full of tension and history

**Notes:**

[ ] indicate overlapping dialogue

This cycle of seven short plays is divided into nine parts:

- prologue
- i. under ground
- ii. dreadful parlor games
- iii. bleach & other household cleaners
- iv. an unfortunate storm related mishap
- v. hearts & flowers
- vi. a personal account of the renovation
- vii. above ground
- epilogue

**Obake** and **bakemono** are a class of yōkai, preternatural creatures in Japanese folklore. Literally, the terms mean a thing that changes, referring to a state of transformation or shapeshifting. Often translated as ghost, the term primarily refers to living things or supernatural beings who have taken on a temporary transformation. A bakemono's true form may be an animal or inanimate object but it will usually disguises itself as a human or appear in some strange and terrifying form. **Whenever ensemble members are not in a main role, they are a part of the unseen mass behind the "Obake" character.**

**Kami** are manifestations of "spiritual essence," commonly translated as god or spirit. **When Kami 1 appears in ( ) after Jasper, it means she is whispering the lines as Jasper speaks them aloud.**

**Shikigami** are a kind of spirit, found in Japanese Mythology, summoned to serve a practitioner of onmyōdō, much like a western familiar. Shikigami cannot be seen by most people.

The setting of the play is a large circle inscribed in some way on a bare stage. This circle represents a variety of locales and objects throughout the plays. **It may be useful to use a larger circle with a smaller circle inscribed.** There is also a single chair.

Any additional props, set pieces or costumes should be present around the periphery of the stage, but not inside the circle. Each primary character's base costume need only be slightly altered by minor additions or subtractions to create the supporting roles.

## prologue

*The ensemble is on stage milling about. Perhaps they are creating the circles that will demarcate the floor plan.*

*The Obake sits in a chair, taking in the audience.*

*When everything is ready to begin, the Obake rises as the ensemble groups inside the circles. They look to her. She looks at them, smiles and then offers a nod.*

*In unison, the ensemble inhales sharply and then exhales, collapsing into the circle, falling limp and lifeless onto the floor.*

*The Obake takes in the scene, turns and then smiles to the audience as the lights crash to black.*

**END SCENE**

## i. under ground

*Deep in the ground.  
Buck tries to stand in  
the circle but can't.  
Eyes adjusting, he is  
dirty, bleeding and  
holds a handkerchief to  
his head.*

*Something moves  
outside of the circle.*

Buck

Hello? Damn it, I can't...

*Looking up.*

Can you guys hear me?! Hello!? God damn it, how am I [going to...?]

*The Obake stands just out outside the light. She is striking,  
lovely, dressed simply. The rest of the cast pools behind her, a  
mass of sounds and whispers that underscore her voice,  
sometimes speaking along with her, beneath her. As she moves  
around the circle, they move behind her, a part of her - the  
unseen horror of her form.*

Obake

[How is] your head?

Buck

Fuck!

Obake

Such language. Tsk tsk. How is your head, does it hurt?

Buck

Where are you, I can't see you?

Obake

Hmm, that's for the best.

Buck

Come out where I can see you.

Obake

Shhh, it's too dark. Now, what are you doing down here?

Buck

I fell down some, the construction site is up there, my building, and I fell through a sinkhole or some [kind of...]

Obake

[Ah, well,] this is where I live. I live down here. Do you like it? I don't mind telling you, it's been such a long time since anyone's visited. I'd offer you some aspirin, but as you can see I live a very spare lifestyle.

Buck

Are you going to come out where I can see you?

Obake

The cupboards are bare.

*She smiles. The mass snickers and quietly laughs behind her.*

Buck

Listen to me, I'm ultimately in charge of this build, I'm the boss, okay? My name is Buck Mason and I designed this fucking building. I'm in charge. So whoever you are, you shouldn't be down here and I will make [sure that...]

*Laughing. She steps into view, poised, well dressed, sharp and clean. Not at all what's expected.*

Obake

[You know,] I used to just love to sew, can you imagine? The motion of my hands, moving the thread, the specificity of it. Feeling the work in my fingers. But the low light down here is murder on my eyes.

Buck

What is this?

Obake

Just a visit. I've been asleep for so long, but all of your banging around woke me up, Buck Mason. So now we're having a little visit.

Buck  
Or I hit my head harder than I thought.

Obake  
Maybe. Maybe that's what this is. It's so dark after all. Eyes adjusting?

*She smiles, but the mass roars and jerks. He steps back.*

Aww, you don't know whether to stand your ground or try to run?  
That's because you can't really see me. If you could really see me,  
you'd know what to do.

Buck  
I can see you.

Obake  
Of course, where would you run?

*The mass writhes behind her. He can almost see it.*

Buck  
They're, they're coming for me, my team; they'll find me [down here.]

Obake  
[Ah yes, the] architect is missing. Where is Mr. Mason? They'll have to  
find him, won't they?

Buck  
That's right.

Obake  
Well then, we should talk now so you can get back to your grand  
building. What will it be? The building?

Buck  
The building?

Obake  
Please don't make me repeat myself. It's tiresome.

Buck  
A hotel.

Obake

Oh, that's perfect. That's perfect. Hmmm, I'll let you go back architect, but I need something from you first, a certain consideration. I need you to move your hotel, ugh that word, the idea of it, it's so perfect. I need you to move it a bit, so that it's above me, just here.

*She points up.*

Buck

Why would I ever [agree to....]

Obake

[Because I'm] asking nicely instead of skinning you and that's more than enough, quite enough.

Buck

Do you, I'm not sure you understand what you're asking for here; do you have any idea how much work that [would entail?]

Obake

[Don't be impolite!] I wouldn't like that and you might suddenly find yourself in a pool of blood with your skull crushed into pieces. But, no, just listen to me, how silly. Look, you give me what I want, and really its not so much, and then I'll make the thing you want most in the world happen for you.

Buck

A strange woman in a hole granting wishes?

Obake

Strange? Oh no, Buck, you'd be amazed.

Buck

Well, your offer sounds too good to be true, as far as offers go. Which is absolutely my politest possible way of saying it sounds like a trick.

Obake

No, it sounds like a bargain. That's what I do. I get what I want and then I give you the thing you want most, no matter what it is. And let's be frank with each other, it's never money or love. Everyone thinks they'd wish for money or love. Or success, but just look at you; you already have those things. Look at the buildings that you create, spiraling above the city; temporary, but beautiful.



Buck

My buildings will last forever. No one does what I do; no one can do what I do. My buildings are monuments of design.

Obake

Huh, I'm familiar with your work, Buck.

Buck

Then you know I'm telling [the truth.]

Obake

[And I know] I can give you what you want, Buck.

Buck

Stop saying my name.

Obake

Anything you want, Buck.

Buck

I want to get out of this hole.

Obake

That's not it.

Buck

It absolutely is it, that's what [I want.]

Obake

[That's immediate,] that's not something from deep inside. And nothing about your life will be the same after our little chat, so why not ask for something more? Let me hear that hidden, secret thing you've always wanted, let me see it, the thing you've never told anyone. Let it just slip into your head without editing or thought...

*She brightens and takes a pointed step away from him before clapping her hands onto her chest. The mass exhales.*

Ah. There it is. That's not very nice at all, is it?

Buck

What? I didn't [even...]

Obake

[Oh yes, I] see it in you.

Buck

I don't know what you think you saw, but I don't have any secrets. My life is an open book and there have been so many articles about me already, everyone knows my past and it is spotless. Now listen, I don't want anything that I'm not willing to work for, to earn.

Mass

*In whispers, hushed, not in unison...*

"Little girls."

Obake

You and I will get along just fine I think.

Buck

You don't know anything about me.

Obake

Little. Girls.

Buck

I'm not interested in your bargain.

*The Obake smiles.*

Obake

Are you sure?

Buck

I do not want anything from you!

*Moans and a roar rise up from the mass behind the Obake.*

Obake

You presume too much by yelling.

*Pause.*

You will accept my offer and you will do what I wish. And this building will be a crowning achievement. Your life will be full, you'll have that one awful thing you so desperately want even if you won't name it out loud and then one day, when your building falls, you'll end up back down here with me.

*She suddenly grabs him by the throat and forces him down.*

Or would you prefer I just eat you now, chew your bones and feel your flesh sliding down my throat.

Buck

How is this a bargain if I have to accept the terms, how is that a deal?

Obake

Semantics.

Buck

No, you called yourself a bargainer.

*She releases him and backs away.*

Obake

Threatening someone is a perfectly legitimate bargaining tactic. And I call myself all sorts of things, spirit, ghost, other, but right now the descriptive words that come to mind are impatient and famished.

Buck

What choice do I have?

Obake

Now there you go again, Buck, you always have a choice. In fact, I can almost taste your "choice" from here. Please, please be selfless. It's a delicious quality.

Buck

Just, just stay over there.

Obake

Is that right?

Buck

Stay away from me.

Obake

You've lost a bit of that bravado now, haven't you? Don't worry, Buck Mason. I'd rather get my price than a simple meal. Because your hotel will be my playground, a playground for "people" like me. And I think we both know that's a stretch, don't we? But honestly, between you and me, no one really pays much attention.

*Pause. Then quietly...*

Buck

I shouldn't want what I want.

Obake

Hmmm, it's not so uncommon. I mean, it's awful. But really that's a moral judgment and I don't often have a place for that kind of thinking. Trust me when I tell you there are worse things. There are much worse things.

Buck

Awful. It is awful. This can't be, you can't be real.

Obake

I'd wager everything feels unreal to you right now. Let's find out together, shall we?

*Pause.*

Buck

Deal.

*She laughs and claps a bit, enjoying the moment.*

Obake

Good. Now, they'll find you soon; drag you back up to the light. I can hear them digging, those gigantic machines. Who could ever get used to such disgusting things? Everywhere. You know, I don't miss a thing about the world up there. Except the moon.

*She looks up and the mass seems to wilt around her with wonder and awe at something unseen.*

I do miss the moon. So beautiful. But nothing else.

Buck

I can't remember the last time I even looked at the moon.

Obake

Such a shame to take something so lovely for granted.

Buck

*Quietly...*

A shame.

Obake

I should go.

Buck

Go where?

Obake

Deeper. Don't worry, I'll be around.

*The Obake steps back to the edge of the circle with a smile on her face. She offers a little wave and is suddenly grappled by many pairs of hands erupting from the mass behind her. But she stops and turns back, the hands releasing her and waiting.*

Oh... and Buck? When I see you again, I'll kill you. So try your very, very best not to see me.

*She turns again allowing the hands to envelop her, pulling her into the mass. She vanishes from the circle and Buck is left alone.*

**END SCENE**

## ii. dreadful parlor games

*The central “living room” area of a large hotel suite. Jasper and Sam stand chatting near some luggage.*

*In one corner, Kami 1 stands very still. She is in a simple, drab outfit, perhaps a bit dirty, hands clasped in front of her. Kami 2 stands behind her looming just over her left shoulder. Also drab and dirty. His hands are clasped behind his back. They both stare at the men intensely. They are incredibly still. Nothing else. Only staring.*

Jasper

Look, Sam, I didn’t want to say anything in front of Kimberly, she’s clearly already annoyed that I’m here. But [what was...]

Sam

[Not true.] She’s really glad you came. We got a discount on the hotel suite by having more than two people. So... that’s good.

Jasper

Uh huh. She pushes my buttons on purpose and you know it.

Sam

What did you not want to say in front of her?

Jasper

When we stopped for gas that last time, what was the deal with her really obviously trying to drive off and leave me in the middle of nowhere? We all laughed and “ha ha” and whatever, but [that was...]

Sam

[She just,] she just didn't know you were still inside. She thought you were in the back seat.

Jasper

She waved goodbye.

Sam

Come on.

Jasper

She hates me, right?

Sam

When we checked into the hotel, were you paying attention to that elevator operator guy? Because it is completely crazy how much you look like that elevator operator guy.

Sam

What are you talking about?

Jasper

It was eerie.

Sam

Eerie? Okay first, that guy was a weirdo. Second, I don't look anything like him.

Jasper

So much like him.

*Kami 1 and Kami 2 shuffle forward a bit. Barely a foot, but they inch closer.*

Jasper

Third, I'm trying to talk to you, but fine. If you don't want to talk about why your girlfriend tried to abandon me at a Mobil station in the middle of the night, a rainy night, with nothing but a little bag of beef jerky and some Red Bull, then we'll just wait until she gets back with the ice and I'll ask her directly.

Sam

You said you didn't want to annoy her.

Jasper

You said she's happy I'm here.

Sam

Jasper, she... that's right.

Jasper

So that was amazingly convincing. Let's just unpack.

Sam

Look, you're always going to be my best friend. I mean, unless you do something like rob me or burn my house down or commit [some...]

Jasper

[What if] it's an accident?

Sam

What?

Jasper

What if I burn your house down and it's accidental?

Sam

This "moment" is exactly the kind of thing that gets under Kimberly's [skin, Jasper.]

Jasper

[I feel like] intent is important.

Sam

I'm saying it would be bad if you burn my house down on purpose, willfully, that would be bad. If it's an accident then of course that's not going to, just, I'm trying to say you're always gonna be my friend. But Kimberly is really special, man. I think she might be the one. Like, "the one." And it just makes me so fucking tired the way you [two bicker.]

Jasper

[Okay, ya' know,] I love that you have a girlfriend and you're in love and blah, blah, blah. I mean, I want those things for [you, obviously.]

Sam

[Blah, blah,] blah?



Jasper

She's, whatever, she's great. But you act differently around her.

Sam

I am different around her.

Jasper

Well then don't act like there's nothing different. And don't act like she likes me when she doesn't.

Sam

She just doesn't get your sense of humor, that's all. Because your sense of humor is like getting hit in the knee by a really weird sledgehammer. And don't you make that face at me; you know I'm right. And I love it. I think you're a riot. Mostly. But it's definitely an acquired taste. So here's the deal: I'll make sure we all get along, no matter how fucking exhausting, I'll do my very best. And you just have to promise to be good.

Jasper

I hear you.

Sam

I want your word. Say, "I promise."

Jasper

"I promise."

Sam

Good. And she'll be good, too. I promise for her. In fact, I'm sure she'll be fine since you have your own part of the suite. This is massive.

Jasper

That's fair. All right.

Sam

I can't get over the size of the room.

Jasper

It is kind of a creepy hotel though, don't you think?

Sam

We have a bar and a living room in our suite, let it be creepy.

*Jasper goes rigid and then blank as Kami 1 starts speaking intensely under her breath. His mouth moves and he speaks, but it's as if he's speaking for her.*

Jasper (Kami 1)

Don't call it a living room.

Sam

Why not?

Jasper (Kami 1)

Don't call it a living room.

Sam

That's what it's, what is wrong with you, your eyes are [all out of...]

*Kami 2 begins to hum a spiritual or church song from the early Twentieth Century underneath the speaking.*

Jasper (Kami 1)

[Don't call it] a living room. A living room is a misnomer meant to erase the stench of death. Homes used to have a parlor. Good homes. And the parlor was for entertaining guests but it was also for displaying family members after they passed away, a room for coffins, a room for mourning and visitation.

Sam

Are you [serious?]

Jasper (Kami 1)

[But then in] the 1920s, Ladies' Home Journal encouraged American women, "Don't let your parlor be a dying room. Instead, treat it like a living room." Trust me, I had the issue, I remember it like it was yesterday.

Sam

Um, okay, you're starting to freak [me out.]

*Kami 2 raises his left hand out, palm up. Jasper completes the same motion as if being pulled along.*

[So a living] room isn't what you think and this collection of well-appointed furniture, no matter how well intentioned shouldn't be a called a "living room." Ever. Ever. Ever!

*Kimberly enters with an empty ice bucket. Kami 1 stops speaking abruptly as Kami 2 lowers his arm and stops singing. Jasper is suddenly present and at ease again.*

Kimberly

I couldn't find an ice machine.

Jasper

Should have let me go.

Kimberly

You wouldn't have found one either, I even looked on other floors. And this hotel is deserted. Even for the middle of the night there is no one else here.

Sam

They're just, just in their rooms. Asleep. We checked in really late.

Kimberly

And the other guests didn't. Because they didn't let their pal have control of the map.

Jasper

Here we go.

Kimberly

I'm not saying anything. It's raining. Dark. I'm sure it was hard to see the tall, gigantic, well-lit hotel on the map. Driving past it. Three times.

Jasper

Stop it.

Kimberly

I'm not doing anything.

Sam

Kimberly, don't pick fights. Jasper, are you all right?

Jasper

I'm fine, why?

Kimberly

He's fine. Oh, I don't know if you noticed it, Jasper, but it's super eerie how much that Elevator Operator looks like you.

Jasper

False.

Sam

Wow. That's exactly what I said, "eerie." Isn't that what I said, Jasper?

Jasper

I do not look like that guy.

Kimberly

So much like that guy.

Jasper

What the fuck are you talking about?

Sam

Jasper, you promised you were going to be on your best behavior.

Jasper

This is me being on my best behavior.

Sam

And Kimberly, you could be several degrees nicer.

Kimberly

Oh, you guys won't believe what that elevator operator who looks like Jasper told me about this room. I think I know why we got such a deal. According to him, several people have died in this room.

Jasper

No way.

Kimberly

Several. That's what he said.

Jasper

Liar.

Sam

Jasper.

Jasper

She's totally baiting me.

Kimberly

And they all died by hanging. Ooooooooooh.

*She laughs.*

Or being hanged. Or hung. It can't be hung. Whatever. It could be kind of cool, I guess. To stay in a room of death, a room that's probably haunted by spirits that are watching us, quietly, waiting to see what we'll do. Waiting to see if they'll have to kill us! Can you imagine?

Jasper

Sam, please tell you girlfriend to cool it with the bullshit scary stories.

Sam

If I tell her to cool it, and there's no guarantee she'll listen...

*Kimberly laughs.*

Then will you promise not to do the Ladies' Home Journal thing again?

Jasper

Kimberly, please tell your boyfriend to speak English.

Kimberly

You've got your own room right over there.

Jasper

Because you already need couple time? We just got here.

Kimberly

I'm simply saying that if you don't want to hang out with us here in our, heh, in our spacious living room, please feel free to go away and give us some privacy.

*She nuzzles next to Sam. Jasper goes rigid again and then blank as Kami 1 starts speaking intensely under her breath and Kami 2 starts humming another tune.*

Jasper (Kami 1)

Don't call it a living room. It's so very, very thoughtless and rude. Thoughtless and rude.

Kimberly

Excuse me?

Sam

No, this is what I was talking about. This happened when you were looking for ice.

Jasper (Kami 1)

That issue of Ladies' Home Journal was read to me. It was read to me and I remember it. Read to me. "Don't let your parlor be a dying room. Instead, make it a living room."

Kimberly

Ladies' Home Journal. Seriously?

Sam

I have no idea.

Jasper (Kami 1)

I need to find some rope and teach you some manners.

Kimberly

Jasper!

*Sam takes a step closer and waves his hand in front of Jasper's face with no reaction at all.*

Sam

It's like he's gone or something.

Jasper (Kami 1)

I need to find some rope and teach you some manners.

*As they speak, Kami 2 shuffles forward in the same odd, clipped step, barely picking up his feet, moving near Jasper.*

Kimberly

Okay, this is totally something you guys cooked up while I was gone, right? You can both fuck off.

Sam

I swear to god, I have absolutely no idea what is going on.

Jasper (Kami 1)

I need to find some rope and teach you some manners.

Kimberly

Come here; get away from him.

Sam

He's not going to hurt me. He's our best friend.

Kimberly

He's your best friend. Jasper, quit it. It's not funny, okay. Sammy, I told you not to bring him. Is this, what, supposed to be funny?

Sam

Seriously, this is not the way to kick off the trip.

*Kami 2 suddenly bends forward at the waist, head cocked to the side, staring at the couple. Jasper also abruptly bends forward at the waist and, eyes wide, opens his mouth in a scream. No sound comes out, but the intensity is there, and Sam and Kimberly are knocked to the ground.*

*Kami 2 begins speaking at full voice as Jasper continues to scream in silence.*

Kami 2

It's cold, it's colder than you could ever, and this is ours, you don't get to, this is ours, we can't leave and you can't stay because this thing, this one thing, and if you knew what we had to go through to, this is our room! You don't have any business in this room, no, colder than, no business, too cold, too dark for your kind of, too loud, you're noisy, disturbing all of the, and if you don't leave now, leave now, leave now, you won't leave at all. You won't leave at all! You won't, we can't, our room, had to go through, no business, you can't stay here-

*As he speaks, Kami 1 shuffles over to him and gently places her hand on his shoulder. This causes him to stop abruptly and return to a neutral, quiet standing position. She then steps in front of him again recreating their original pose.*

Kimberly

What fuck was that?

Sam

I don't know.

Kimberly

I want to leave.

Sam

What about Jasper?

Kimberly

I want to leave right now.

Sam

We can't just leave him here like some kind of zombie.

Kimberly

Yes we can! I tried to leave him at the Mobil station, I can sure as hell leave [him here.]

Sam

[I'm not] leaving.

*Kami 2 starts up with his song again, only this time at full voice.  
Sam and Kimberly can hear it now.*

Kimberly

Okay, this is fucked up.

Sam

Where is it even coming from?

Kimberly

This is not okay, Sam, I'm getting out of here.

*Kami 1 begins to inhale sharply, repeatedly, almost as if she's trying to catch her breath. Sam and Kimberly begin to clutch at their throats, gasping for air, staggering around and eventually collapsing. Kami 2 gets louder as Sam and Kimberly fall to the ground. Kami 1 continues the sharp inhalations.*

*Suddenly everything stops. Sam and Kimberly are lifeless on the ground. Jasper is still facing them. After a moment, Kami 1 turns to Kami 2 and begins speaking under her breath...*

Jasper (Kami 1)

I'll find some rope to teach them some manners.

Kami 2

Strong rope.



Jasper (Kami 1)  
I'll find some rope to teach them some manners.

Kami 2  
This is our room.

Jasper (Kami 1)  
We'll hang them up.

Kami 2  
That's what we do.

Jasper (Kami 1)  
Yes.

*Kami 2 kisses Kami 1 on the cheek. Kami 1 smiles. Jasper is still blank, facing the bodies of his friends.*

Kami 2  
I love you.

Jasper (Kami 1)  
I love you, too.

**END SCENE**

### iii. bleach & other household cleaners

*Betty sits on one side of an immense hole in the floor. Wearing rubber gloves, she vigorously scrubs at the edge with a wire sponge. Her hair is pulled back, but has come undone. Some bottles of cleaning solution sit next to her.*

*In "the hole," the ensemble is huddled to form a mass, lying on the floor, curled up with each other.*

*Ethan enters.*

Ethan

Betty, are you awake? I thought for sure you'd still be out cold this, holy shit! What the hell happened? Betty, what happened to the floor?!

Betty

I'm cleaning it up.

Ethan

Betty there is a giant hole in the kitchen floor.

*Pause.*

There's, okay, there's a huge fucking hole in the [floor.]

Betty

[Ethan,] do I look stupid, am I stupid Ethan? I'm on my knees right next to the thing; I know there's a hole in the kitchen floor. But I'm trying to clean it up and it just keeps getting bigger.

*She breaks off a small piece of the floor and squeezes it.*

Ethan

I don't think that's helping.

Betty

Huh, well, I don't think you know what you're talking about.

Ethan

Jesus! That was harsh, this is just [a little...]

Betty

[Oh, was] it harsh?

Ethan

Yes. Betty, how did this happen? This is not normal.

Betty

It's not normal? Oh, I thought maybe every night when I take all of those fucking pills to go to sleep, giant holes just open up in the kitchen floor. No? That's not how it happens? Obviously it's not normal, Ethan. I've never seen anything like this in my life. But I've been trying to wrap my head around all kinds of things I never imagined before last night, last night when I didn't take those pills.

Ethan

You're supposed to take your pills, Betty, the [doctor said...]

Betty

[And I didn't] go to sleep.

Ethan

Why didn't you take them?

Betty

So I've had time and I'm just a little more used to the idea of the hole than you right now, okay?

Ethan

Okay, I'm gonna need a little bit more than that.

Betty

Oh? Fine. I started trying to clean off this "stain" in the middle of the floor last night. This stain. And it wouldn't come up. And the harder I scrubbed, all night, the deeper in it went until...

Ethan

Until what?

Betty

Until now, do I need to draw you a map? And I'm trying really hard Ethan, I mean really hard to stay calm and focused, to give you the benefit of the, I don't know, but you really need to get out.

Ethan

You want me to leave? Okay. So I don't know exactly what to call the way you're acting right now, but it's giving me "concern" and then there's also the gigantic hole in the floor and I'm not going anywhere.

Betty

Well, stay away from the hole, because I don't know how big it'll get.

Ethan

Wait, wait, so all night you've been, wait, did you do this?

Betty

Ugh, I'll tell you what Ethan, it's a question of perspective I guess. But I'm sure to you it seems like I did this, so yes, I did this.

Ethan

Okay, what?

Betty

Do you think there are things that defy cleaning, in the face of modern chemicals designed to clean anything? I don't like that idea at all, but I don't know if this will ever be clean, it just seems to get worse and worse, but it has to be cleaned and I think maybe I'm losing it [a little.]

Ethan

[Oh no, no, don't] cry, I have no idea what's going on, but I wanna' help if I can, just, I still don't understand [what's...]

Betty

[You stay] over there!

*He stops abruptly and takes a few steps back.*

Just stay over there. I don't know how much weight the floor can...

*Ethan moves to the edge of the hole and looks in.*

Or, ya' know, go right up to the edge. Ignore me and go up to the edge.

Ethan

Jesus. I can't even see the bottom.

*She is scrubbing again...*

Betty, I can't even see [the bottom.]

Betty

[It doesn't] have a bottom!

*She tosses the piece of floor into the hole. The Mud Woman catches it, so it makes no sound.*

I was surprised when I realized that, it just goes and goes and goes.  
Can you imagine?

Ethan

How can it not have a bottom?

Betty

Ethan, do you think I'm a good wife, despite my issues, insomnia, nightmares, anxiety, have I been a, you know what, don't answer that.

Ethan

So I'm gonna, I think we should, I'm gonna' call someone.

Betty

Tell me who you call for something like this please. Please tell me. A general contractor? A physics professor?

Ethan

Your doctor.

Betty

Perfect! Perfect, so he can give me more fucking pills.

Ethan

Well just stop making it worse.

*She laughs at him and keeps scrubbing.*

Betty

Do you know what it's been all week, the nightmare?

Ethan

That's why you're supposed to take [your pills.]

Betty

[Ugh, I have the nightmares] either way, the pills just stop me from waking up.

*She stops scrubbing.*

I'm underwater, like crouching at the bottom of some kind of, it's deep, it's murky, but I look up and I can see through the wavy water there are lights. So I try to stand up and I'm so much larger than I should be, like when I stand up, my head and shoulder break the surface and I keep getting bigger. And when I'm finally standing up, my hands are all scaly with horrible hook-like things. They're not my hands, they shouldn't be anything's hands. And I look towards the lights and you know what they are? Clusters of buildings, a city maybe, and bam, right there, right in front of me is that awful hotel where we stayed on our honeymoon. Do you remember it?

Ethan

Of course.

Betty

Because it was awful.

Ethan

You've only slept through a handful of nights in all the years since we [stayed there.]

Betty

[Somewhere] underneath all of the modern furniture and the little bottles of liquor. Say it was awful; say that.

Ethan

It was awful.

Betty

And in that entire awful hotel, there's only one light on. One room. I'm bigger than the entire building, it's dark, it's raining, I'm not supposed to be there, I know I'm not supposed to be there and just the one light is on in one room and as I take a gigantic step towards the hotel, somewhere, so small, I can hear someone screaming.

Ethan

That's a terrible dream.

Betty

Awful.

Ethan

And I'm sorry you have to have it.

Betty

So I didn't take my pills to sleep. Last night, I didn't take them.

Ethan

I heard you.

Betty

I didn't go to sleep, Ethan.

Ethan

I get it.

Betty

So I was awake all night, Ethan.

Ethan

I didn't... oh.

Betty

I saw you with that woman on the table, I saw, against the counter, I saw, and here on the floor. I saw that, all of it here on the floor. How could I not see it? I even walked in here at one point, stood right there, and you didn't even see me.

Ethan

Listen, baby, I know how it [might seem...]

Betty

[Ugh, don't] call me that. It makes my skin crawl. Look, I asked you to leave, can you leave? Clearly I have a lot of work to do and I don't really have time to answer all of your questions about the unprecedented and admittedly bizarre hole in the kitchen floor.

*A beautiful voice rises from the hole, distant but clear.*

Mud Woman

I love you Ethan.

Betty

You shut-up down there, do you hear me!

Ethan

Is, is someone down there?

Mud Woman

I love you Ethan.

*Betty begins pouring bleach into the hole.*

Betty

You would think, with all these chemicals, I mean really.

Ethan

Okay, that time I heard it, who's down there?

Betty

No one. Would I be pouring bleach onto a person? No. And how could there be a person in the bottomless pit that is now our kitchen floor? There couldn't. There couldn't be a bottomless hole and there couldn't be a person in the bottomless hole, now really, what a lovely morning we've had and I really should have made coffee and I wonder how many nights when I was out cold you did things on this floor that I can't clean and could you get the hell out!?!

*A mud-covered hand abruptly rises from the hole.*

God [damn it!]

Mud Woman

[I love you] Ethan.

Ethan

What the fuck?!

Betty

You stay down there!

*Betty kicks at the hand until it disappears back into the hole.  
Ethan backs away further, trips and falls into a seated position.  
She returns to pouring bleach.*

Ethan

That was a person, was that a person?



Betty

No, it's just dirt.

Ethan

That was a fucking hand.

Betty

Fine.

Ethan

Fine? Fine what?

Betty

If you saw a hand, that's what you saw. How many women do you think? If you had a guess, how many nights?

Ethan

Betty, it just happened, I want to explain it to you, but this doesn't seem like [the best...]

Betty

[Please] explain it.

Ethan

Betty, that was a hand. Can we [just...]

Betty

[Explain!]

Ethan

Okay, okay, I know you've been sad, but I don't know how to help. And you haven't touched me in months, I'm not saying it's your fault, it's not your fault, but you take all of that stuff and pass out and it's hard to sleep next to you like that. You don't even move. It's creepy, but I know you need the rest, I'm not blaming you. So I started to get up sometimes. Then I started to go out sometimes. Then I started to come back sometimes.

Betty

So more than just last night.

Ethan

I don't ever bring them here. Usually.

Betty

Is that a yes?

Ethan

I take them, I mostly go to that motel by the interstate, or just, in the car, but you're always out cold, so I thought, no, no, I don't want you to think I come here and do that to [you because...]

Betty

[You did] come here and do that.

Mud Woman

I love you Ethan.

*Betty starts laughing pointedly when she hears the voice.*

Ethan

Betty, let's just get out of here. Let's get you away from whatever that is and then I'll explain everything, just [let...]

Betty

[No.]

Mud Woman

I love you Ethan.

Ethan

Look, baby, we [were both...]

Betty

[I told] you not to call me that!

Ethan

I was a dick, I was wrong and I'm sorry you saw what you saw, no, that I did what I did, but let's get the hell out of here.

*The hand reappears, groping the edge of the hole for a grip.*

Mud Woman

I love you Ethan.

Ethan

Oh my god, what is that?

*The Mud Woman, pulls herself out of the hole. Keeping her stomach on the floor, she writhes to move.*

Betty

That's me. See how pretty.

Ethan

Make it go back in the hole.

Betty

I can't.

Ethan

Make it go back in the hole, Betty!

Betty

I've tried, but I can't. She just keeps climbing back out. I think she's maybe all the parts that fell out of me when I saw you last night fucking that other woman in the middle of the floor.

Mud Woman

I love you Ethan.

Ethan

Don't let it [touch you.]

Betty

[I know it's] only trust, right? Only love. Only you fucking another woman, or women, how would I even know? So I should have a proportional response. But if I could crush your skull right now, I might. If I could twist your arms back until the bones inside buckle and shatter, I might. If I could peel off your skin a piece at a time, I would. I mean, at this rate...

*She pulls off her wedding ring and throws it into the hole. Again, the Mud Woman catches it before it falls.*

Ethan

Don't!

Mud Woman

I love you Ethan.

Betty

This is my house, my fucking kitchen! You don't get [to...]

Ethan

[This is] our house!

Betty

Oh! Our house?

Ethan

Yes!

Betty

Okay, you can have this part! This part right here. All this is yours. Just jump right in, it's all yours and you can...

*The Mud Woman gets close enough to touch Betty. She grabs Betty's leg and it immediately stops Betty, her eyes blank.*

Ethan

Betty?

*A low hum softly fills the kitchen with vibration. Both women's heads tilt up and Betty inhales sharply. The Mud Woman pulls herself up against Betty's leg. Betty looks as if she might float into the air if not for the anchor of the Mud Woman. The words spill out of them both in a torrent.*

Betty

I don't think you can know how much joy I feel when you touch me, when I feel you caress me, that's love, such love, your lips, touching my lips, it moves through me like waves, like it might pick me [up...]

Mud Woman

[No.]

Betty

And I feel you press against me, against me, this pressure, your arms around me, breath on my neck, never [anything like it...]

Mud Woman

[No, don't! Let] [go.]

Betty

[And every time] you are so gentle, lay me back on the bed, I feel you inside me and my eyes go wide, head thrown back and every part of me can feel every small thing in the air, moves [against me...]

Mud Woman

[Stop!]

Betty

Every thing that moves anywhere and the sweat and heavy breathing and you [and me and every little thing as my heads starts to spin and I can't be still, it feels so amazing...]

Mud Woman

[You're a liar and you lied, you cheated, you ruined, you're a ruiner and I watched you ruin!]

*Betty kicks free of the Mud Woman and falls backwards onto the floor. The Mud Woman, face down, reaches towards her.*

Mud Woman

I love you Ethan.

Ethan

Shut-up! Shut the fuck up you thing! Betty, Betty, are you all right?

Betty

No.

Ethan

Look, just, just don't think about last night, what you saw, think about all beautiful moments, mornings in bed, when I brush the hair back from your face, not even beautiful, just the everyday stuff, the little things that are us. When we go to coffee shop and just sit quietly for hours and we'll look up every once in a while and just smile. I know your face like that, it's right here. The things that [aren't...]

Mud Woman

[I love] you Ethan.

Ethan

Why won't it stop saying that?! What if I, what if I make it go back?

Betty

You can't make it go back [down there.]

Ethan

[No? What if] I fucking kill it? I can throw it back down there if it's dead, if it's dead it'll fucking stay down there. It can't keep repeating that.

Mud Woman

I love you [Ethan.]

Ethan

[You're going] back down there, you're going to leave us alone.

*Ethan leaps across the hole and lands next to the Mud Woman, grabbing her. She immediately wraps around him like some kind of vice. Ethan grapples to get the Mud Woman to release.*

Mud Woman

I love you Ethan I love you Ethan I love you Ethan I [love you Ethan.]

Ethan

[Ah! No! Get] off of me!

Betty

Ethan!

*They both fall into the hole, disappearing. Silent.*

Betty

Ethan? Ethan? I wish you'd left when I said to leave.

*She sits for a moment at the edge of the hole. She begins to scrub the edge of the hole again. A woman's hand covered in mud abruptly jerks out of the hole.*

Mud Woman

I love you Ethan.

Betty

Shhh, I know you did.

*Pause. She continues cleaning.*

Mud Woman

I love you Ethan.

Betty

I know.

**END SCENE**

## iv. an unfortunate storm related mishap

*Edith stands in the  
center of the circle. An  
out dated suitcase sits  
by her side. She's  
forcing a smile, but  
she's nervous.*

*Just outside of the  
circle, barely lit, the  
Obake sits in a chair.  
Her legs crossed, her  
posture above  
reproach. She listens  
but is focused on  
sewing something on a  
remnant of fabric. The  
mass behind her is  
focused on Edith.*

Edith

I'm not a very good "vacationer." If there even is such a word, but you know what I mean, right? I'm not good at going somewhere just for the sake of relaxing. Never have been. But Henry, that's my husband, he insisted on taking a trip to the beach. He said we'd earned it. I've never been one to argue with him, I learned that one pretty quickly. Isn't it disappointing how you can think you know a person and then everything goes all lopsided.

He never hit me or anything, that's not where this is going. He just could have been nicer in some ways. In retrospect though, between you and me, I didn't really want to go.

*The Obake chuckles to herself as the mass all lean back.*

But before I knew it, we were in a strange room in a strange city, not too far from the beach. Such a shame though, it rained every day from the minute we arrived, just rain and rain. That silly kind of rain that's not really rain but still just enough to get you wet, you know the kind.

I didn't mind staying in the hotel mostly, I guess there's something about other people cleaning and cooking for you that does feel a little bit luxurious. Although I was stunned when I found out how much money Henry was spending on that place. Stunned. But I liked the room well enough. Henry was livid. And angry. He drank everything in the mini-bar. And then a nice woman named Vanessa, I think that was her name, would come each morning and refill it so he could drink it all again. I stopped looking at the prices on the little menu card. He didn't want to hear about it anyway.

So that was pretty much the first two days. There was some sex, but... eh, it wasn't very good. There was some relaxing, but you could always hear the rain outside. There was some name-calling and that wasn't very nice. And the little bottles of rum and gin everywhere. Then on the third night, after I finished building the cutest little sandcastle, well that's not what to call it, but I built something like a sandcastle out of those little liquor bottles, the rain became something else all together. I mean, it really just transformed into a big storm. Not a hurricane, they weren't evacuating, but those sirens kept going off every few hours.

*The Obake begins to sing quietly to herself...*

After this attractive young man named Grant from room service delivered an impulsively ordered snack for the two of us, we went to bed. But the storm got louder, I don't know, just battering the windows. That's how it sounded. I have no idea how Henry managed to sleep through it. Well, he was drunk so that's probably why. Also, those decongestants probably made him drowsy. Anyway, I finally got up and opened the curtains covering the floor-to-ceiling windows.

*The Mass slams to the floor with making a collective thud with their hands, releasing a hissing noise as Edith's eyes go wide.*

The rain was almost sideways, because of the wind, and coming down in these thick sheets. We were up so high, I could see pockets of the area between our hotel and the ocean were without electricity. Just dark spots here and there where the power had gone out and then past that, the emergency lights out by the beach.

And beyond that, out in the water, something moving. At first it was just waves pushed around by the storm, but then definitely something moving. It was so dark, I pressed my face against the glass and I saw...

*She stops, wiping away tears and catching herself. She smiles nervously, recovering. The Obake stops singing.*



Now, I know how this sounds so don't think I'm unaware, all right?

*She looks around to see if anyone else is listening. The Obake stops her sewing and focuses on Edith.*

But this thing, that's what I'm going to call it, this thing started rising out of the water. It was hard to make it out against the night sky, the details, but the storm clouds provided a kind of backdrop, so I could see it in relief. A bit. I've never, it was so large with a long neck, not long, just stretched somehow and it had these, I'm not going to say hands, because that would make it real in my head. It was gigantic, larger than the hotel even, can you imagine? And then it took a step towards the shore. I just started screaming.

*The mass starts screaming, but the Obake puts out her hands and quiets them, never letting her gaze leave Edith.*

I rushed into back to the bed, but Henry was still out cold. I didn't know what to do. He wouldn't wake up, I pushed him, yelling, but he just wouldn't budge. I looked around, frantic, for something to hit him with. I grabbed one of those little coffee pots from the table in the room and stood over him with it in my hand. He was breathing, heavy. Not snoring, breathing heavy. And I just, I just...

*The Obake leans forward and takes over with something like zealous enthusiasm as Edith relives every moment of the story in her mind, across her face.*

#### Obake

I pulled back and smashed the coffee pot over his head, but it didn't break the first time, or the second, so I kept slamming it down over and over until it shattered and even then I kept bringing it down, jagged edges and all until I couldn't even see what I was hitting anymore and I couldn't even breathe, everything spinning, slamming it down again and again with that image of the thing in the storm looming just out of sight so I couldn't make it out exactly, something slipped, something undone, slamming, cutting, beating, just beating and I...

*Edith cries out causing the Obake to stop. They are both out of breath, chests heaving. The Obake leans back, delighted, trying to compose herself. Edith looks broken, but tries to pull herself back together. This takes a moment.*

## Edith

I didn't like Henry, he was my husband but I didn't like him. Even still, there was no reason, not that there ever could be a reason for that kind of, I just have no idea what happened. I had this broken coffee pot in my hand and he was lying in the bed, wet sheets. But before I could even think about it, the storm shattered the windows in our room, rain pouring in and I fell backward as the wind swept through, knocking over furniture, shaking the room. Henry's body rolled off the bed and just disappeared over the edge of the broken window. Just gone. I dragged myself to the edge and looked over. His body had fallen all the way down and hit the concrete next to the pool. I could barely see it in the floodlights next to the emergency exit. It looked like several rooms had shattered windows on the lower floors and suddenly I became aware that my hands were being cut by the edges where the windows broke.

*She looks at her hands. The Obake looks at her own hands. The mass behind the Obake hisses and moans quietly, but she silences them with a sharp gesture.*

Everyone was evacuated to the basement. That's where a very understanding paramedic named Jonathan bandaged my hands. Over hot chocolate, he told me several people had died because of flying debris or from falling. So there were other people who had... difficulties. The funny thing, well none of this is really funny, but the odd thing, one of the odd things, is that even now I have trouble being sad about Henry. I hate what happened, but there's some kind of fog around him in my head. It's almost like he never existed.

*The Obake begins sewing again with a grin and begins to sing quietly to herself again...*

Oh, but everyone at the hotel was so nice about everything, so apologetic. Like they could control the weather. They told me I could come back and stay anytime in the future, if that wouldn't be too painful. But I don't think I'll ever go back there. I'm not much of a "vacationer" anyway. Did I already mention that?

**END SCENE**

## v. hearts & flowers

*Ginger is waiting in a  
low-key party dress.  
She gently sings  
“Dream a Little  
Dream” to herself and  
gently tests out a few  
dance steps.*

*On the edge of the  
circle, Shikigami 1 and  
Shikigami 2 sit on a  
pair of stools.  
Shikigami 1 holds a  
gigantic book in her  
arms, a ledger of some  
kind. Shikigami 2 has a  
pencil behind his ear.  
They watch Ginger and  
smile.*

Shikigami 1 & 2  
You’re a lovely dancer.

Ginger  
Stop it.

Shikigami 1 & 2  
Ayuh. It’s gonna’ go wonderfully.

Ginger  
How do I look?

Shikigami 1  
Ginger, ya’ look cunnin’.

Shikigami 2  
Wicked cunnin’, Ginger.

Ginger  
You always say that. She’s late.

Shikigami 1

There's traffic [tonight.]

Shikigami 2

[Traffic is] just numb. What can [you do?]

Shikigami 1

[Or maybe] she got lost on [the way.]

Shikigami 2

[You're not] the best with directions.

*Ginger stops singing to herself, stops dancing.*

Ginger

So it's my fault?

Shikigami 1 & 2

No.

Shikigami 2

But...

*He looks at Shikigami 1. She opens the giant book across her lap.  
And puts her finger to the page.*

Shikigami 1

On April 11, 1962 ya' gave a woman directions to meet ya' at a speakeasy in Olympia, Washington and she was lost for hours because of one-way streets ya' didn't mention and attacked by troublemakers.

Shikigami 2

On January 22, 1931 ya' abandoned a woman in a giant hedge maze just outside of Concord, New Hampshire because ya' were running ahead apiece, ahead too fast, and she got lost.

Shikigami 1

And it's cold in January in New Hampshire.

Shikigami 2

I miss the cold.

Shikigami 1

I miss the north.

Shikigami 2

On May 6, 1989 ya' told a woman in Rockford, Illinois the best way to get to your [house was...]

Ginger

[Okay, Jesus,] fine. So I'm bad with directions. Fine.

*Shikigami 1 & 2 exchange a satisfied glance as Shikigami 2 closes the giant book.*

I hate that book. And anyway, this is different. How could you not find this hotel? It doesn't look like anything else in the entire city.

Shikigami 1

I'm sure you're right. Maybe you should have a piece of chocolate. That always calms you down.

Ginger

Ugh, that would be delicious. But I didn't bring any. I didn't want it to melt in my purse.

Shikigami 2

Then maybe ya' should take another Xanax.

Ginger

I've already had 3. Ugh, blind dates are so nerve racking.

Shikigami 1 & 2

Don't get gawmy; it's not your first blind date.

*Shikigami 1 begins to open the book for reference.*

Ginger

Close that book now. I know it's not my first. It's technically number 476. The more women change, the more they stay the same.

Shikigami 1 & 2

Well let's try and be a little more upbeat.

Shikigami 1

If you can get this one to work.

Shikigami 2

Any of them, just get any of them [to work.]

Shikigami 1

[Ayuh, any] of them.

*She gives Shikigami 2 a sharp look. He looks back defiantly.*

Shikigami 2

Don't look at me like that. I want to go back up north. Where it's cold. Where the night sky is crisp and clear and makes you feel small but like you have a place. I'm tired of following her around.

*Ginger puts her hands on her hips, annoyed.*

That's right, I'm tired of following ya' around. We do everything we can to help, to make this happen for ya', because your curse happens to come with perks.

Shikigami 1

He doesn't mean it.

Shikigami 2

I do, yes I do.

Ginger

It's not my fault that I'm this weird spirit thing; it's not my fault I'm not allowed to rest.

Shikigami 1 & 2

Ya' it is.

Ginger

Fine. Whatever, so maybe I wronged a woman. Once.

Shikigami 1 & 2

Ya' you did.

Ginger

A really, really long time ago. But does this feel like a reasonable punishment?

Shikigami 1 & 2

Ya' it does.

Ginger

Well, color me surprised.

Shikigami 2

And we're stuck followin' ya'.

Shikigami 1

It isn't gonna help at all for ya to get all out [of sorts.]

Shikigami 2

[Stuck followin'] ya' here of all places; I don't like this place.

Shikigami 1

Me either.

Ginger

I didn't ask for [your help.]

Shikigami 2

[And you're] drawn to this creepy hotel so we're drawn with ya'.  
Tethered to ya', dragged around, isn't that the finest kind? Creepy  
place after creepy place, can ya' imagine? And we're polite and we try  
to steer ya' back towards humanity, or at least peace, but you're so  
stubborn, ya' never listen, ya never [take heed.]

Shikigami 1

[Ayuh, now] this [isn't gonna...]

Shikigami 2

[Ya' won't] even look at the book. Ya' know you can learn from your  
past mistakes, that's the whole point [of the...]

Shikigami 1

[Why don't] we all just calm it down, all right? It takes one true love  
and none of us have to do this anymore. Then we can head back north,  
finally, and ya' can go on where you like or wherever you go next.  
Easy as that, right?

Shikigami 2

*Under his breath...*

Except you keep eating all of them.

*Ginger turns on them sharply.*

Ginger

What?

Shikigami 1

He didn't say [anything.]

Shikigami 2

[I didn't say] anything.

Ginger

It's not my fault that I get hungry. That's not my fault. You don't understand the hunger, you won't listen when I try to explain it, the [way it...]

Shikigami 2

[Excuses.]

Shikigami 1

Stop it.

Ginger

It's just this thing that happens, when I get even a little bit excited. My heart pounds so hard, I smell flowers or some kind of, and then it happens before I even know what I'm doing, my mouth waters and my teeth itch and I'm just tearing away at their soft flesh, I have no idea why it's so hard, but it is and there's nothing I can do but try to do the right thing. Again and again. I just wish I were better at it.

*Something in her becomes more menacing.*

And I'm sorry if you're getting impatient, I'm sorry you have to follow me around, trust me, and I'm sorry if my damnation is getting wearisome for you, fuck off. Now, I have a solid feeling about this one, I'm feeling very "in control" so stop agitating me. If you want to help me make this happen then just lay off.

Shikigami 1

We know it's not your fault; it's part of the deal.

*Shikigami 2 taps the book in Shikigami 1's lap.*

Shikigami 2

But this? This is a wicked high number of women you've eaten.

Shikigami 1

Consumed.



Shikigami 2

Eaten. Your skin turns white, your jaw goes all gawmy, it's terrifyin' and you're lucky ya' don't have to see it. But we do. So if you want to...

*Shikigami 2 abruptly stops as both Shikigamis notice Violet enter. Ginger turns. They take each other in cautiously.*

Violet

Ginger?

Ginger

Violet?

Violet

Yes.

Ginger

Oh good. I mean, good to meet you. That sounded funny, ugh. Not good like "oh good you're not ugly." Oh! But you're not ugly, not at all, I mean you're very nice and I'm just going to stop right now because I am not doing well at all with this whole first impression thing, am I?

*Pause.*

I'm glad you came.

Violet

Me too. Although, honestly, I thought about not showing up.

Ginger

Oh.

Violet

Dancing?

Ginger

They have these impromptu things, in hotel ballrooms all over town. It seemed like a good icebreaker, I don't know.

Violet

Well here I am, even though I haven't danced in a long time, don't even know if I remember how anymore. Sorry.

Ginger  
Ah.

Violet  
But, but I absolutely wanted to meet you.

Ginger  
That's good.

Violet  
I've heard such good things.

Ginger  
Have you?

Violet  
Just the other thing, the dancing thing...

*She trails off, taking an awkward step away from Ginger.*

Ginger  
Well, I don't want you to be uncomfortable or [anything.]

Violet  
[And I] really appreciate that.

Ginger  
But there will be dancing in there. I know, I know, why don't I show you a few simple steps before we go in, okay, just out [here?]

Violet  
[Oh no,] you don't have to do that, it's [really...]

*Ginger moves in, forcing Violet into a dance position.*

Ginger  
[Oh hush,] it'll be fun, come on.

Violet  
I don't really know [what to...]

Ginger  
[Shhhh. Just] follow me. You'll be great.

*Ginger moves Violet around, slowly shifting into a dance. Ginger hums a tune for them. It becomes a song, a lovely song, beautiful and hypnotic. They giggle and swap quick glances as Violet slowly becomes less clumsy with a simple step. This takes a moment and is crushed under excruciating anticipation.*

Violet

I think I'm getting it.

Ginger

Look at you. See, it's not hard.

*They laugh. Then stop, caught in a moment, very close. The Shikigamis hold each other's hands in excitement. Violet breaks.*

Violet

Sorry.

Ginger

I'm sorry.

Violet

Oh no, no, don't you be sorry.

Ginger

No?

Violet

It's okay, really. I didn't mean to...

Ginger

All right.

Violet

You're so, I don't mind saying, there's something so compelling about you and... I'm just a little rusty.

Ginger

You were doing great.

Violet

No.

Ginger

You really were. You're... great.

Violet

Thank you.

Ginger

You... you smell like flowers. Oh, it's so ridiculous, I feel like a little girl.

Violet

Me too, [it's so...]

Ginger

[Would] you, Violet I know this sounds, and I don't want to be, but you just, oh, good grief, Violet, after the party, if we have a good time I mean, would you want to grab some dinner?

*The Shikigamis exchange a worried look.*

Here in the hotel. You can really work up an appetite dancing.

*Violet lights up and then tries to hide it. The Shikigamis both lean forward on their stools and whisper urgently to Ginger.*

Shikigami 1

Don't do it.

Shikigami 2

She's nice.

Violet

I don't see why not.

Ginger

Oh.

Violet

Yes.

Ginger

Well, okay. Let's dance.

Violet

And... we don't have to stay long.

*Ginger smiles. She takes Violet's hand.*

Shikigami 1 & 2

Please be nice.

*As the women leave the circle, Ginger looks back...*

Ginger

I'll do my best.

*She exits with a little wave.*

*Shikigami 1 sighs and opens the gigantic book. Shikigami 2 pulls the pencil from behind his ear and, shaking his head, he crosses out something in the book.*

**END SCENE**

## vi. a personal account of the renovation

*Lights up on Franklin  
in a smart tie. He is  
standing alone in the  
circle, off center. He  
waits, hands crossed,  
perhaps whistling.*

*Just outside of the  
circle, barely lit, the  
Obake sits in a chair.  
Her legs crossed. She  
listens attentively  
holding a simple desk  
bell in her lap.*

*A man enters, a hotel guest with an overnight bag. He stops to  
yawn and rubs his eyes.*

Franklin

Good evening, sir.

Guest

Hello.

Franklin

Or morning, it is quite late. Coming aboard?

Guest

Yes, I... yes.

*He enters the elevator. They stand for a moment and the Guest  
looks about awkwardly.*

Franklin

What floor?

Guest

Oh, right. Right. 11.

Franklin

Ah, good floor.

Guest

11?

Franklin

Mm hm, it's just high enough to see over some of the other buildings.

*Franklin presses an unseen button with his fingertip.*

Guest

No lever?

Franklin

Oh, no, just the buttons.

Guest

Seems so old fashioned to have an elevator operator.

Franklin

Actually I'm a concierge. Franklin Mims. I have my master's degree in hospitality administration, but we all take shifts in the elevator. Part of ensuring the "luxury experience" for our guests.

Guest

God forbid we should have to push our own buttons.

*Franklin looks at him, a look devoid of anything.*

Kinda' slow, huh?

*The light dims some as the doors close.*

Franklin

The owners feel that having service in the elevators creates a certain kind of atmosphere, that kind of thing. And, you know, makes up for all of those stories about this place.

Guest

Stories?

Franklin

You don't know about the, ah, I see, well just ignore the stories. There are only the two elevators, east and west, just the two, so that's not much more to staff I suppose.

Guest

And this is...?

Franklin

I'm always east, sir. Two elevators, 14 floors. I'm always east.

Guest

14 floors, that's a good size. You said you're name's Franklin?

Franklin

Franklin Mims. I prefer Ms. Mims though.

Guest

Ms?

Franklin

Professional courtesy, if you don't mind.

Guest

No, it's just, I wanted to make sure I heard you correctly when...

*A bell sounds. It is the Obake ringing the desk bell.*

Franklin

8.

*And the doors open. Canary, bloodied and beaten, literally drags himself into the elevator.*

Guest

Jesus. Jesus, are you all [right.]

Canary

[Get the fuck] away from me!

Guest

This man needs help.

Franklin

He lives in the hotel. Best to leave it alone, sir.

*The doors close as the Canary cowers in the corner. Quickly and quietly he recites a rhyme to himself. It's barely audible...*



Canary

Mary had a pretty bird  
feathers bright and yellow  
slender legs, upon my word  
he was a pretty fellow  
Mary had a pretty bird  
feathers bright and yellow

Guest

Do, do you [need...]

Canary

[Leave me alone!]

Guest

I'm sorry, I [didn't...]

Franklin

[Sir, please] don't disturb the other guests.

Guest

Franklin, I'm [trying to...]

Franklin

[Ms. Mims,] if you don't mind.

*The Guest takes a step away from Canary as he begins to whimper.*

Canary

Feathers bright and yellow.  
Feathers bright and yellow.

Franklin

You know, this is the original elevator system, the mechanics I mean,  
the guts of it. They updated the interface, but all the rest is authentic.  
Some people think the elevators are haunted, but I don't put much  
stock in it. Some people think the hotel is haunted, but that's...

*The bell sounds again.*

12.

Guest

We missed my floor.

Franklin

Sir, with all due respect, I don't tell you how to do your job.

*And the doors open. Punch enters wearing an apron. She has a thick, syrupy Southern accent.*

Punch

Franklin.

Franklin

Ms. Punch.

Canary

No, no.

Punch

Oh, yes.

Canary

I'm not a bird.

Punch

Now honey, where did you think you were runnin', little Canary?

Canary

I'm not a bird.

Punch

A little bird.

Canary

I'm not a bird.

Punch

My little bird.

Canary

And often where the cage was hung  
And often where the cage was hung  
And often where the cage [was hung]

Punch

[Shut the] fuck up! Now, are we done yet, little Canary?

Canary

I can only do this so many [times.]

Punch

[Did I do] somethin' to make you think we were all finished up, little Canary? No I did not. Now, be still. 17 please.

Guest

17?

*Punch spins and slaps the guest hard, knocking him back.*

Punch

Trust me when I tell you, sugar, it's better not to speak.

*Franklin pushes a button with his fingertip. They all stand awkwardly for a moment, Punch rubbing Canary's hair as he cowers, the Guest holding his face. The doors close. The Guest leans over to Franklin...*

Guest

Aren't you going to do something?

*Franklin begins whistling again. Then, a bell sounds again.*

Franklin

23.

*And the doors open. This time the light is filled with shadows. A painfully deafening combination of metal churning, things in motion and horrified screams fills the space. The Guest's eyes go wide with horror at whatever he sees outside and he presses to the back of the circle. The other people in the elevator pay it no mind. The Guest is hyperventilating. He crumples onto the floor covering his eyes. Punch examines her nails absent-mindedly. Canary tries to get up, but she smacks him. The doors close.*

There was a great deal of hubbub when the hotel was being renovated you know? They still talk about it, people protesting from the local community foundation complaining about maintaining the original architecture and people from neighboring buildings complaining that the added height would ruin their views. They only added a few floors and it looks like it was always this way, doesn't it? Just like part of the original design. Frankly, I'm amazed at how quickly they got the project done in the end. You know, they even got the original architect to sign off on the renovations in order to quiet those historical critics. It wasn't easy because he's a crazy old man now, crazy, but it lends the whole undertaking a bit more artistic credibility somehow.

*A bell sounds again.*

17.

*And the doors open. Punch drags Canary out of the elevator.*

Punch

Goodnight, Franklin.

*The doors close.*

Guest

Oh my god.

Franklin

It's terrifying isn't it? Keeping a bird as a pet, I hate birds, especially large birds, but it takes all kinds, doesn't it?

Guest

Oh my god.

Franklin

You're right though, about the elevators, they are quite slow and a bit unpredictable. Between you and me, most of the staff would prefer they rip out the insides of these old things and just go for it, go completely modern. Can you imagine? Just tear them out all together, a full evisceration, you know?

Guest

I think I'm going to be sick.

Franklin

Cleave the building open and excise the elevator cars, drag every piece of cable and steel out, pull on it until it snaps, gives way, or sever the stubborn parts, get a nice, firm grip and just wrench it all out. Doesn't seem like it's going to happen though. A shame since they did all this construction on the outside. Do you know the name of the architect? I should know, I think he was famous.

*Pause.*

I'll have to ask someone next time I think about it.

Guest

The lobby.

Franklin

I'm sorry?

Guest

The lobby, I want to... go, go to the lobby.

*A bell sounds.*

Franklin

Oh, but here we are at 11.

Guest

What?

*The doors open. The Guest stays crumpled up. Franklin reaches a hand out to his shoulder. The Guest jerks away. Franklin picks up the Guest's bag and holds it out. The Guest takes it and crawls out of the elevator.*

Franklin

Enjoy your stay, sir.

**END SCENE**

## vii. above ground

*David stands in the circle nervously looking at his watch. He is dressed to impress, adjusting his tie in a nervous repetition. Checks his watch again. He is obviously in public view, probably up on a dais of some kind.*

*Simone enters. She is dressed simple and chic with a small clutch purse. Approaching, she smoothes out her dress.*

David  
Where have you been?

Simone  
I'm sorry.

David  
They were taking all of these photos. Until they realized you weren't here.

Simone  
I said I'm sorry.

David  
Nobody even knows who I am.

Simone  
Everyone knows who you are.

David  
Well they want photos of the architect's granddaughter, not her husband.

Simone  
They let me do one last walk through and I got a little lost.

David

It is a big building.

*They look out at the building in question.*

Still seems like a shame to demolish it.

Simone

A Buck Mason triumph. But the foundation is collapsing. The ground underneath it is giving away.

David

Still, it's a shame.

Simone

I hurt my wrist.

David

How?

Simone

I don't know. Lifting or, I don't know. Somewhere in the hotel. I took something though; it'll be fine soon.

David

Simone. Today?

Simone

I took something for the pain. You don't want me to stand through this hurting do you? And... also something for my nerves. That's all.

David

Look at me.

*She does.*

You're about to go all glassy, aren't [you?]

Simone

[I told you,] I only took the two things. And maybe something to relax.

David

Something for pain. Something for nerves. Something to relax.

Simone

Who can remember, just stop it, I'm fine. It's his most famous hotel.  
And it's going to be parking; did you know that?

David

You've mentioned it 20 or 30 [times.]

Simone

[From] near majesty to parking.

David

Like I said, it's a shame.

Simone

I was a little girl in that building. My grandfather made sure everyone  
knew exactly who I was when we would visit. His favorite little girl  
running around his most stunningly successful design.

David

It's funny.

Simone

Hmm?

David

You never talk about your childhood.

Simone

I'm feeling this overwhelming nostalgia.

David

That's not nostalgia; it's the pills. Now, where is the old man anyway?

Simone

Around I'm sure. Just look for the clutch of photographers.

David

I haven't seen him since this [morning.]

Simone

[Well he] wouldn't miss this David. He's here somewhere. You know,  
he had them move the entire hotel over from its original footprint?  
After they started construction, concrete already poured, he had them  
move the entire thing just a little bit to the side.



David  
Why?

Simone  
Eccentricity?

David  
Huh.

Simone  
I used to go up with him when his buildings were under construction. They'd strap this white hard hat on me and let me walk around on the open girders, seriously just one foot in front of the other into open space.

David  
You're kidding?

Simone  
Nope. I was six or seven. In an over-sized hard hat. My grandfather let me do anything I wanted to really.

David  
You'd never get me up there like that.

Simone  
Oh you are not afraid of heights. [Come on.]

David  
[No, no, not] heights. As long as there's glass and steel and all of the things that keep you on the inside, I'm fine. But being out in the open like that where you could just fall. That's crazy. I might have a heart attack just thinking about it, I mean really imagining it. It's terrifying.

Simone  
Maybe. But I loved it.

David  
I'm happy right here on the ground thank you very much. Seriously, the old man is late.

Simone  
It doesn't really matter. They'll do it without him.

David

You think?

Simone

They're supposed to do it at sunset, no matter what. Just boom and then a cloud of dust and...

*She is dizzy for a moment, her eyes flutter, leaning on David.*

David

Whoa, here you go. Come on. Stand up.

Simone

I'm standing up. Don't worry, they'll just, just think I'm over-emotional.

*She regains her footing.*

David

Something for pain, something for nerves, something [to relax.]

Simone

[Well it's] a big day.

David

Are you all right?

*She laughs coldly looking at the hotel. He looks out at the building as well. They do not look at each other.*

Simone

Hotel hotel [hotel hotel...]

David

[I wish we] could have made it through one day. I thought since we'd be out in public, literally having our pictures taken, I thought we might make it through one day. I'm a, I'm a patient guy, but it's getting worse, Simone.

Simone

No.

David

Yes.

Simone

No.

David

Look, okay, I know today is stressful, I know it. And I'm here with you because I said I would be and I want to be. I do. But you really need to try and stay as clear headed as possible, okay? Especially if your grandfather is one of his moods, I need you on my side and together.

Simone

I'm focusing.

David

When he gets all crazy, he's a handful all by himself, all that babble about ghosts under the floor, in the ground and whatever. I can't deal with both of you spacing out. So just... don't take anything else until after they blow up the building, all right?

Simone

I think I'll be doing much better in the very near future. The sun is almost down.

David

Ugh, what difference does that make?

Simone

"Droit de seigneur."

David

You know I don't speak French.

Simone

Yes.

David

I hate when you do that.

Simone

It's a phrase my grandfather taught me. It means 'the lord's right' and in medieval times it, oh, David, don't you ever wish there was some kind of thing, just one thing, we could blame for all of the other horrible things in life?

David

No.

Simone

Wouldn't it make everything, not everything, the bad things, easier to accept if there was some kind of volition to all of it?

David

I seriously doubt it.

Simone

I don't know, do you wanna' hear a story about this hotel?

David

You're not even making any sense now, Simone.

Simone

Do you want to hear a secret story about this hotel?

David

Not if it's a long story.

Simone

After my father and mother went away, died I guess, but really they just vanished, after that I did everything with my grandfather. When he would bring me here, and I was just a little girl then, he would always come into my room at night to tuck me in and he would tell me a story, never at home, only when we [came here.]

David

[Can we] please just [try to...]

Simone

[It was] a story about a bright and handsome young man who made a deal with some horrible thing in order to gain a single wish and he wished for a beautiful girl. And his wish was granted.

*She puts the back of her hand over her mouth for a moment as if struggling to keep something down. She still looks at the hotel.*

And then he would kiss me goodnight. I mean to say David that he would kiss me goodnight in a way that no little girl should ever be kissed, this man that I trusted, the only man in the world, with hands like oil spilling onto my body, wet and dirty.

David

Oh my god.

Simone

Only at this hotel, he said, and it didn't make any sense at the time, he said he got to have me first, at seven years old, he got to have me first.

David

Simone.

Simone

"Droit de seigneur."

David

How do I, how do I not know this?

Simone

*Coolly wiping away a few tears.*

Now don't get all worked up. Why is that something you'd know? I don't even want to know it; I certainly don't want other people to know it. But something about today [and the...]

*David quickly looks around, scanning the crowd.*

David

[Where is] he now, right now?

Simone

Why?

David

You were just a little girl.

Simone

I was just a little girl.

David

You were just a little girl!

Simone

Oh David, it all happened so long ago. There's nothing you can do, what are you going to do if you find him?

David

I don't, I don't know. Something.

Simone

In front of all these people? The reporters and photographers?

David

In front of these, I don't care, yes! I don't care who sees me, Simone. He hurt you? You're telling me he hurt you? I'll break every bone in his old, decaying body.

Simone

*Rubbing her wrist again, turning her hand around and around.*

Can you believe they let me wander around that building before the demolition? It seems so dangerous, so many heavy things. And monsters. Can you imagine?

David

Where is he?

Simone

It's finally going to be over, David.

David

Where is he?

Simone

Bleeding from the head. Unconscious. In room 728.

*The sound of an explosion rings out and a brief blast of light flickers across the two. Simone's face registers delight, even wonder, with a smile and a small gasp.*

*David slowly turns to look at her as the building is erased.*

**END SCENE**

## epilogue

*David turns again to  
look at the building. He  
slowly reaches out and  
takes Simone's hand.  
She does not look away  
from the blast site.*

*The Obake steps into the circle as the rest of the ensemble joins  
David and Simone. They all look towards the collapsed building  
and then, slowly, their gaze drifts towards the Obake. She smiles  
and nods.*

*Buck collapses into the circle as the lights dim.*

*The rest of the ensemble scatters as he crashes to the ground.  
They move behind the Obake and form the mass again.*

*Buck slowly tries to rise, but can't get to his feet. He's a much  
older man now; his life is behind him. He has a head injury again.  
Fresh. The mass hisses and releases a low moan. Buck turns to  
see the Obake and pushes himself away a bit.*

Obake

Oh, there you are, Buck Mason.

*She offers him a little wave.*

Welcome back.

**END OF PLAY**