

BOROGOVE

by GRANT WIGGINS



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Inspired by Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
& Through the Looking Glass by Lewis Carroll

But most of all, the Jabberwocky poem.

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EXT. TULGEY WOOD - AFTERNOON

CHESHIRE CAT (V/O)

*'Twas brillig and the slithy toves did
gyre and gimble in the wabe.*

Pale spikelets of Yorkshire fog grass shiver under the wind toward a forest guarded by an underbrush of thorny brambles that at first glance is like any other but on a second, is of an age that tests mortal comprehension.

Tress grotesquely deformed not by disease but time with only pitch black lanes between, as no light can pierce the tangled canopy hiding what horrid imaginings lay within the tenebrous of this disconcerting place of yore.

But in the other direction. Across an overgrown lawn littered with tufted weeds, under a gray sky is Borogove Manor, not entirely Jacobean or Victorian, baroque or gothic with a stone façade, balconies and vast windows decorating the over fifty room & four floor fortress of an English estate that impresses as much as it forebodes.

CHESHIRE CAT (V/O)

All mimsy were the borogoves.

INT. ESKELL'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

It's clearly the office of a great hunter as from the wainscoting below to the orbicular skylight above is an encyclopedia of death decorating the english oak walls of this two floor mausoleum. Most prominently hung over the roaring fireplace at right is the massive head of a white bull elephant with nacreous six foot tusks, this array of mounted heads leaves no room for art, here hang in fusty immortalization of post-mortem decay are bears, tigers and lions and even a rare white lion, white rhino and an albino gorilla along with those extinct or soon to be.

A Tasmanian tiger, Falkland island wolf, red gazelle and Toolache wallaby. A monument to one man's grandiloquence and that man is **ESKELL BOROGOVE (60s)** a sight of olde world masculinity with his commanding white beard and hair. Wearing leather suspenders that hardly contain his muscular shoulders and a chest so broad it dares to tear free of his white high collar shirt while his strong forearms scarred by battling beasts for their right to live, flex as he lifts his Gye and Moncrieff safari rifle. Proudly showing off his polished tool of death. If some men overcompensate, Eskell is compensation.

WILTON (O.S.)

A tale verily told, Mr.Borogove.

Eskell's brown breeches crease as he smugly brings his John Lobb booted foot onto the ottoman taught with the fur of a skinned panda as he looks to **WILTON EALDWINE (30s)** seated in an oak bergère with pen and journal, an awkward thin fellow yet with an undeniable boyish charm, striking cheekbones and his brown hair in a quiff.

ESKELL

Don't be silly, I've brought you into my home to write of my life, call me daddy.

WILTON

I'd rather not, but do you have any more treacherous tales for our dear readers?

ESKELL

The hunt for the *peaking* white lion not exciting enough for you my beautiful boy?

Wilton shifts, far too educated not to know he's making up names but the white lion on the wall complicates the truth a bit too much for him to call Eskell out, perhaps to the victor go not only the spoils but also the name.

WILTON

It's that I'm sure there's something juicier in your impossible made possible escapades through sheer numbers alone!

Blowing enough smoke up his ass to call reinforcements.

WILTON

I want this book to not just tell your story but be one that changes the reader, to color hearts, stain souls, to lighten their burdens when they become too heavy and soften sorrows on direful days.

ESKELL

Well how about I tell you of my Javan Tiger hunt. The last species of tiger I had yet to check off my Havisham trophy list, the only brand for any decent man.

WILTON

They released a trophy list?

ESKELL

Yes, once you've shot ten black rhinoceri and mailed in their horns which was a bother as that was ten I'd not have in my collection so I had to kill twenty more.

Eskell proudly motions to them all mounted around the engraved architrave of the bay window behind his desk.

ESKELL

They give you the red back kill book.
Only five hunters have ever completed it.
Allan Quatermain was the first. I could
hang you from the neck with one of that
man's chest hairs, beautiful bastard.

Eskell props the rifle on his shoulder and walks to the window, looking out at the Tulgey Wood. The leaves of the trees suddenly jerk unnaturally with no sign of a breeze.

ESKELL

I began planning the perfect excursion to
the Sunda islands. Deep in the Nusantara.
Mosquitoes the size of your fist my boy.

Wilton licks the pen nib and noisily turns to a new page.

ESKELL

Now, it was a hot sticky Archipelago
spring. But really are't they all my boy?

WILTON

I wouldn't know, sir.

ESKELL

Of course not! That's why I'm telling
you. You writers need something to write
about. It'd be drivel left up to your
mushy minds. Anyway, I left by P&O steam
navigation. We made port in Batavia. My
bag man Penwin lost his nerve and tried
to call off the trek due to storm clouds.
But I would have none of that cowardice!

Wilton writes down, "ego over safety."

ESKELL

Because I see things through like father
said a man should! I drew a map, grabbed
my Westley Richards rifle and a flask of
navy strength rum. Can't hunt without a
proper drink or you may well be a savage.

Eskell rubs his beard and nods, agreeing with himself.

ESKELL

Then lead the grueling horse ride, had to
shoot a few that gave out but when we
arrived the boys wanted to rest until the
next day to hunt. Again, I'd have none-

WILTON
Of that cowardice.

Eskell tromps back from the window to Wilton, he lowers the rifle from his shoulder and whispers into his ear.

ESKELL
If you interrupt me again, I'll see you
all the way through my dear boy.

Wilton nervously nods as Eskell swings the rifle barrel menacingly past his face and lays it on the desk.

ESKELL
I began to track my prey.

Wilton raises his hand like a scared child in class.

ESKELL
Speak bitch.

WILTON
You began tracking right there?

Eskell smacks the desk, scaring Wilton.

ESKELL
Of course! I lay eye on the tracks! Right
by the camp! I finished my drink and into
the jungle I went with Joyo, a local boy
who offered to guide. I didn't need him
of course but he needed the experience.
Foolishly went ahead with nothing but a
damned spear and his filthy sandals.

Wilton raises his hand again.

ESKELL
Enough of that, just don't speak over me.
Ask your questions freely my boy.

WILTON
Why would you call him foolish?

ESKELL
Well he was a man of the jungle, what did
he know of the dangers? Never read a
field guide in his cursed young life.

Wilton continues writing but his disgust is beginning to
outpace his fear as his features tighten into a grimace.

ESKELL

Moments later I thought I heard a woman scream! I ran over and found him with a gash across his stomach, guts spilled down to his knees, wailing on and on.

WILTON

My God! What did you do?

ESKELL

I did what any man would do for another! I took away his misery with my knife.

WILTON

Your knife?

ESKELL

Joseph Rodger's and sons, hunting knife, stag bone handle. Exceptional blade.

WILTON

I mean what did you do with it?

ESKELL

I cut his throat. Better to die than lose your reputation screaming like a coward.

WILTON

How old was he?

ESKELL

14, maybe 15.

WILTON

And when was this?

ESKELL

Three years ago.

WILTON

Please do continue, sir.

ESKELL

I pushed on, knowing at any moment I could share the same fate as young Joyo. Rifle in hand I carefully scanned the monstera leaves keenly as a gyrfalcon.

He points to the white and gray taxidermied bird on the desk of this white and gray man with black heart, now fashioned into a lamp in mockery of its' former life.

ESKELL

Looking not for movement but the terrible yellow eyes and then I smelt it.

WILTON

The scent of the tiger?

ESKELL

No. Joyo had released his bowels. But it was the smell that drew my attention! The tiger was upwind of Joyo, using the scent as cover. The intelligence of the beast unrivaled by any i've faced!

WILTON

Isn't it more likely it attacked him and hid after hearing you come running?

Eskell tenses in a flash of rage and Wilton relents.

WILTON

Because it sensed your strength in comparison to a weaker man.

ESKELL

If so, it found its' bravery by leaping right over him at me! Any hesitation and i'd have been a finer meal! I aimed, shot and struck it in the heart! Killing it in midair and catching it on my shoulder with one arm! I carried it back to camp where we celebrated and toasted the life of poor Joyo well into the night. And there is the blood thirsty Javan bastard!

He points to the Javan tiger's lifeless head on the wall in feigned roar, looking oddly unimpressive next to the head of a Kudo deer with its winding burnished horns.

ESKELL

So, tell me. Was this exciting enough?

WILTON

I don't, well, i'm not sure...

ESKELL

Don't mumble, say what you mean to say!

WILTON

I choose discretion in wake of the various threats and insinuations.

ESKELL

Nonsense! I won't harm a hair on your pretty little head. I've paid you already, I don't waste money. I treat interruption and truth differently. I have many more if needed. But who am I kidding of course they will be, this is my biography! Fill it with grandeur!

Eskell rounds his desk and rubs Wilton's shoulders but Wilton closes his notebook and stands to face Eskell.

WILTON

The truth is Mr. Borogove. I think you're a narcissistic lying bigot, misconstruing embellishment for the growing of chest hair. If I were to write this we would be laughed from London to your beloved Nunsantara. Sir, to even suggest that you caught a four hundred pound tiger with one arm, not to mention the charges you would face for the boy you murdered-

Eskell tosses Wilton into the wall, rips his shirt open and smacks his chest, knocking the wind out of him.

ESKELL

Bare and soft as pudding! Now look upon me, does it look like I need to add nary a hair you trembling little dandy!

He tears open his own to show a briar patch of gray chest hair as Wilton falls to his knees, trying to breathe.

ESKELL

No more quips? No more cunning remarks!? Might I help you find them my boy!?

Eskell draws a gold Purdley pistol from his pants, cocks it, puts it to Wilton's temple and glares down at him.

ESKELL

Shall I blow out your brains and hire a better writer! Call me a liar again and I'll feed you my cock, then add a bullet to chase the taste of my virile seed!

He grabs Wilton's hair in his rage as the writer sobs but Eskell stops and sniffs. His uncontrollable anger turning to a piteous revulsion at the crying man on his knees.

ESKELL

At least Joyo had the dignity to die before he shat himself like a coward.

He pulls the trigger, the gun clicks empty and Wilton shrieks as the door opens and into the office steps, **FORDY BOROGOVE (Late 30s)**, a pale delicate woman with an unsettling youth muddying her age in a worryingly Dorian Gray fashion, her froissé blonde hair a shade from white in a messy ponytail. Dressed much like her father in a white poplin blouse with alençon lace from stand-collar to placket tucked into taupe riding breeches that match the cordovan leather knee boots, giving a soft fox-like contrast to her ogreish gorilla father. Standing quietly indifferent to the sight of her father holding a gun to a man's head who appears to be seconds from being forced into sucking his cock. Eskell tosses the gun away in a pointless attempt to hide it as Wilton sobs in relief.

ESKELL

Ah! Mr.Ealdwine, meet my lovely daughter!
Dear, Mr.Ealdwine stumbled at the sight
of your beauty as I was showing him a
black powder pistol I got in Kortrijk not
to say these theatrics will be of use
with your particular proclivities.

FORDY

You don't need to tell everyone.

ESKELL

Poppycock! Might as well let it be known
why I won't have a grandson and our
bloodline will end with you.

FORDY

You've had all the time in the world to
make me a brother, don't blame me.

ESKELL

If your mother hadn't started fucking my
gardener perhaps i'd have had more time.

Wilton crawls sniffing towards the door.

ESKELL

Bettany! Show Wilton the door!

The sound of feet rushing to the door are followed by a maid with cute features on her caramel face sticking her head in with up-done black dreadlocks in her own messy bun and a classic black victorian maid uniform minus the apron and bonnet, it's **BETTANY "BETTS" RINTHEL (20s)**.

BETTS

Yes sir!

FORDY

Why was he really on the floor?

ESKELL

The coward challenged my manhood! What would you prefer? That I let him?

FORDY

How was that proving your manhood?

ESKELL

Some day, a man will insult you and you will make him suck a gun and you'll finally understand what I was doing.

FORDY

So now he'll seek revenge, write of what you did to him and my preferences. It'll be a scandal from here to the Old Nichol.

ESKELL

If the cretins in the Old Nichol want to worry about us instead of the hell that is their lives, consider it a compliment but that fop wouldn't dare after I taught him that iron is more fearsome than his graphite. Now go tell Bettany to come and sanitize this floor, that is unless you'd like to roll around with her on it first.

FORDY

I am not fucking Bettany.

ESKELL

I hear the moans! This house is like a cathedral, sound carries in every damned direction, how quiet do you think you are?! You're a Borogove! When we orgasm it's a proclamation. It's as if a King or Queen arrived! Hear ye, here we are! Like the Niagra, white, wet! And a lot of it!

FORDY

Are you drunk?!

ESKELL

Of course I am dear! It's a Tuesday afternoon! The most insubstantial week day. I nearly shot a welshman!

They both come dangerously close to sharing a laugh.

FORDY

Ealdwine is a welsh name is it?

ESKELL

Don't change the subject! It has nothing to do with you and her caterwauling! It's distracting when i'm in here working!

FORDY

What work?

ESKELL

Watch your tongue!

FORDY

You inherited everything, you're always here. What do you do besides finding poor new creatures to decapitate and display?

ESKELL

New!? I have shot every animal my girl! This is about you, the maid and me having to pretend I can't hear what I hear!

FORDY

I'm not doing anything with her.

ESKELL

Then it's Margaret! It's one of the women! That much I know! Stop mouth pleasing the help! I've put my foot down!

FORDY

Like you did with mother?

ESKELL

A lord need not explain himself to peasants. You know your mother betrayed us both, all she cared for was coin.

FORDY

Did you just call me a peasant?

ESKELL

You're my Princess.

Harkening back to a former closeness, nearly calming her annoyance but she knows it was his intent and he knew she knew, not a game of cat and mouse but cat and cat.

FORDY

I'm just saying that-

ESKELL

Oh shut up! I don't care! I'm tired of your voice. I give you the world and you thank me with all this nagging.

FORDY

I say things because I care and you're doing things that could affect us poorly.

ESKELL

Why are you still speaking? Did you not hear me? I don't care. I do as I please. Stop being a bitch and leave the room.

The insult stings her enough that she nearly tears up, fighting back the emotion as he cruelly taunts her.

ESKELL

Bit old for that aren't you? But don't worry you'll be fine, you can wipe those tears away with the money when I'm dead.

FORDY

Because money makes up for this?

Speaking through an emotional frog in her throat.

ESKELL

It does, believe me. My father used to beat me with that lignum vitae cane of his. I've never put my hands to you, you've had it far better than I did.

FORDY

You've grabbed me more than once.

ESKELL

Only in a blind rage, not with intent.

FORDY

Honestly, things you say are worse, words scar my mind, my body at least heals.

ESKELL

Then have a drink, it doesn't erase the scars but it's helped me forget them.

FORDY

It sometimes seems you take so much pride in surviving what your father did, you'd rather hurt me with your pain than try to actually attempt to heal your old wounds.

ESKELL

You say I survived. I say he saw me through. The happy boy I was, existed only until I got to know my parents. There's things I'll never tell you.

FORDY

But that's just it, if you would open up maybe i'd understand you more.

ESKELL

That's the paradox. I know how kindly i've treated you, What I could have done to you. Even if you don't believe me.

FORDY

I do believe you but you still say cruel things as if they mean nothing. You're shaping me like your parents shaped you.

ESKELL

Perhaps but at least I don't mean it. Mine, they meant it all. They had to.

FORDY

How do you know?

ESKELL

That I can't tell you.

FORDY

I'm just trying to help.

ESKELL

I don't care. You can leave. I've said that how many times over the years? You won't have to deal with me anymore. I'll visit if you want. Run away if you must but please do shut the fuck up my dear.

He picks up the rifle and walks to the window, giving her his back as he pretends to shoot toward the Tulgey Wood.

ESKELL

But you won't for the same reason you didn't leave with your mother. You're like me, you like not just the money but the air of importance this home allows. So the other little girls in Mayfair see you as the lady of the manor. Even with our disagreements. Same reason I took the beatings and didn't kill my father in his sleep. Same reason you don't. The story. No honor in being a sneaky coward, that and you see the end game. It's in sight and nearly in hand, you'd hate to ruin it before your inheritance arrives. I'm sure you'll host many an orgy here and fuck Bettany and Margaret on this desk to celebrate my death if you haven't yet.

Eskell expertly opens the rifle breech and looks inside.

FORDY

I have not.

ESKELL

Maybe you should hurry it along.

He closes it and tosses the rifle across the room to her. Fordy isn't prepared and nearly drops it as he turns back to look out the window again at the Tulgey Wood.

ESKELL

Your freedom is in and at hand.

He stuffs his hands in his pockets and takes a deep breath, while Fordy looks the elephant rifle over.

FORDY

I want to help you, not kill you.

ESKELL

I am helping you, I love you which is why i'm offering you everything right now.

He cracks his neck with a careless jerk of his head.

ESKELL

You do nothing but spend my money and pester me about the way I choose to live out my suffering, it's unkind of you.

FORDY

Because you're threatening people, talking about death all the time, it's like you're dying already and pushing me away in spite of yourself, why?

ESKELL

Don't psychoanalyze me, you're my child, just fuck off and go buy another diamond or take your inheritance this instant.

Fordy opens the rifle breech herself and sees it is in fact loaded, she sets it on the desk and leaves quietly.

ESKELL

I didn't raise a coward! Work on that!

INT. LIBRARY - AFTERNOON

In grim silence, sits Fordy in a mahogany cigar chair with her head hung, surrounded by the arboreal bookcases carved into the walls of their sepulchral library. She looks up at the painting just above the damp fireplace.

Vasily Perov's "hunters at rest" in an old bronze frame, one she's sat and contemplated countless since childhood.

But the subjects had come to symbolize different things than they had. Once relating to the man eagerly listening to the tale being told by the man she now saw as a liar like her father, then the questioning man scratching his head now it was the dog searching for his own joy in the bushes, always fated to be called back to an awful master. Free to run away, but the courage? No.

Like any domesticated, pampered pet escaping into the wild it was a gamble. But in the unknown was hope. She looks out the window at the Tulgey Wood that again reacts in a hideous twitch to observation that would doom her sanity had she noticed but she's too busy squeezing her rage and barely stifled sadness into the arms of the chair while she tries to choke down the emotion. She looks back up at the painting, frustration on her face as tears fill her eyes but they insult her desire for strength. She sharply smacks her own face.

FORDY

Fucking worthless.

Punishing herself further with a squeeze of her neck.

BETTS (O/S)

Would you like me to-

Fordy drops her hand from her neck in embarrassment.

FORDY

Leave!

She snaps at the soft-spoken maid, who runs away as the cycle of abuse in this awful excuse for a home goes on.

FORDY

Sorry!

Fordy leans back into the chair as does her head, staring up at the chandelier above, tears roll down her face.

FORDY

Fall on me, fall on me, fall on me.

A thumb wipes away her tears as the face of **MARGARET KNIGHTON (50s)**, peeks over the back of the chair with a warm smile and graying brown hair pinned up neatly, wearing a white chef's dress and apron but no bonnet.

MARGARET

What's the matter?

FORDY

Nothing.

MARGARET

We both know that's a lie but I could make some chamomile tea, milk and honey.

FORDY

I don't want to fall asleep but I should wonder why I want to be awake when he is.

MARGARET

Want me to talk to him?

FORDY

I don't need you getting fired and as you're the only one making life bearable.

MARGARET

And you mine.

FORDY

Stop fussing over me. I'm fine, it's just all this waiting, everyday waiting.

MARGARET

Waiting for what?

FORDY

For him to die.

Fordy laughs, Margaret grimaces and shakes her head.

FORDY

You know what I mean him, his opinions, his ways, being around him and all this shit, I'm getting older. How long do I play dutiful daughter to a mad man?

MARGARET

As long as you choose.

FORDY

I'm not killing my father.

MARGARET

I didn't say that, for you to even suggest that, says more about you.

FORDY

I assume you heard him raving about the idea. If he wants to die he can kill himself, he has more than enough ways.

MARGARET

I meant we *could* leave. I'm a chef, not a bad one at that if I do say so, we could start a bakery shop, run it together.

FORDY

I won't have you work to support me but he's also right about me as much as I wish he wasn't. I don't want to give this lifestyle up for some leaky cottage.

MARGARET

I've worked here since before you were born, most of my life i've supported you.

FORDY

Don't twist this into what it isn't. You took a job and held it, I don't pay you and after all this time would you really rather leave to face the unpredictability of another household, at least the hell we have here is our own familiar one.

MARGARET

Shhhh...

Margaret slips her fingers into Fordy's collar, tracing the bone before snaking them sensuously under her jaw to frame her face as her thumbs begin to massage the groove behind Fordy's ears until her jaw opens in relaxation, as her tension melts away. Margaret's left hand gathers her ponytail and roughly tugs it, earning a moan from Fordy before offering her right thumb to her lips, that Fordy latches onto and sucks with a deeply shameless "mmmmfh."

MARGARET

My cranky girl.

BUTLER (O/S)

Ahem.

Margaret pops her thumb from Fordy's mouth. Fordy leaps up and both see **BENJAMIN "BEN" HAMSTEAD (50s)**, the butler and most senior employee in the doorway with his head held high in silent judgement of their display.

A man with a classic beauty about him, ebony skin and cheekbones that are points of pride, with his black hair slicked back as neatly as his uniform along with a white shirt, black silk cravat folded over his throat, matching tailcoat and finely pressed pants with polished oxfords.

But in his slightly arrogant yet seductive brown eyes is the story of a tired man beyond caring, presentation contrasting the disinterest in his lack of reaction.

MARGARET

What is it?

BEN

Lavinia is here.

FORDY

Mother? Why?

MARGARET

This early?

FORDY

Why would she be here at all?! I haven't seen her in years. Fuck is going on?

MARGARET

I told her it would be alright.

FORDY

Why the fuck would you do that?

MARGARET

She said she needed to speak to you. We send letters now and again, I've known her since we were both children you know.

FORDY

After what she did? What in the hell else have you been doing behind my back?!

Sounding much more like her father than she'd ever admit.

BEN

Well she's in the dining room.

MARGARET

Ben! Would you see to Eskell? To give Fordy some time alone with her?

FORDY

You don't need to, I don't want to see her nor do I want to talk to her.

MARGARET

Yes you do.

BEN

Whatever this is Margaret, it's sloppy
and it better not become my problem.

Ben is too smart not to sense something, but he placates his old friend and takes his leave. Margaret rushes over to the door and peeks out left to see him enter the open double doors of Eskell's office at the hallway's end.

BEN

May I help you relieve some tension sir?
I could hear you from the west wing...

His eyes meet Margaret's as he closes the left door with the bronze "E" then the right with matching "B," then locks the noisy escutcheon plated mortise locks.

MARGARET

Come when you're ready, but don't wait
too long please, it's important.

Margaret leaves Fordy in the oppressive quiet of the library once more. Fordy again looks over at window and out at the Tulgey Wood, but now the trees and branches seem changed, more twisted, more blatantly testing her sanity like the first horrid pangs of a panic attack. Something is certainly wrong with certain uncertainty.

INT. DINING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Fordy trudges into the dining room, arguably the most impressive in the manor with a wall of floor to ceiling windows that reach two stories, giving an unobstructed view of the wretched Tulgey Wood, like a living landscape painting in massive frame with the cimmerian sky blending into the umbrageous canopy. At center is a mahogany table with cabriole legs that seats thirty, but today only one is at the left head who happily stands up to greet Fordy.

It's **LAVINIA LUTHGATE (50s)**. A green eyed rubensesque woman with red hair in a bun, wearing an exquisitely tailored ruby dress while sporting obnoxious cleavage below a pearl cameo broach on a velvet black choker.

LAVINIA

Darling.

She kisses Fordy on the forehead, leaving a stamp of red lipstick that Fordy wipes but leaves behind a red smear.

FORDY

What is it?

LAVINIA

Don't be that way but my love, have you been crying, what's happened?

Lavinia tries to touch Fordy's cheek but Fordy brushes away her hand. She relents and gestures for Fordy to sit down at the table which she does without further fuss.

LAVINIA

I've missed you and I want to apologize.

FORDY

After how many years?

LAVINIA

I had no choice in the matter.

FORDY

You had a choice not to have an affair with the gardener, Bishop was it?

LAVINIA

And you had a choice to not to run off to tell your father when I called after you.

FORDY

I was a child, I didn't even understand what I saw but unfortunately I remember.

LAVINIA

I wanted to be wanted, your father didn't- he never really wanted me at all dear.

FORDY

I wanted you.

This strikes Lavinia like a gut punch of love, she tries to touch Fordy's hand but again she pulls away.

LAVINIA

I was lonely, he worshipped me.

FORDY

So that's what you wanted? To be worshipped? Not loved?

LAVINIA

Love wasn't an option with your father. I was just another trophy. Once I tarnished that I was less valuable to him than any one of the dead animals on his wall.

FORDY

I notice though, he never replaced you,
puts a bit of a hole in your logic.

LAVINIA

He had Ben for that.

FORDY

I've never noticed them show any
affection for one another.

LAVINIA

They're subtle men dear.

FORDY

I don't judge you for needing affection.
I judge you for leaving me. I was happy
when you were here, but after? No.

LAVINIA

Then I guess, no I know. I let you down,
but I didn't feel I had a choice. It was
adultery and he had a witness. You. And
Ben backing him sight unseen. I was going
to get nothing. I didn't want to go back
to cleaning houses for shillings. All he
wanted was you and he offered to pay me
to give him custody without a fight.

FORDY

So you let him buy me?

LAVINIA

He's your father, it's not as if I left
you with a stranger off the street.

FORDY

He's cruel and going mad I fear.

LAVINIA

It was best for US both, what would I
have done? A single mother. Tearing you
from the one home you ever knew to live
in squalor? If not even the money aspect,
think of the dangers. We'd have had to
live in a slum with me working all hours,
leaving you alone with scoundrels afoot
outside. Defenseless as you were and as
strikingly beautiful as you are.

Fordy turns away but Lavinia catches her chin in hand.

LAVINIA

Like a porcelain doll staring out the window into filthy streets begging to be stolen or worse. At least here with that mad man, you were safe from all the other mad men as he's the maddest man of all.

Fordy softens, cracking a smile, Lavinia playfully taps her nose and they share a laugh over Eskell's behavior.

LAVINIA

I chose the path to make sure you were given the best life and I didn't face a worse one and look at the strong woman you've become, smart, so full of choice and freedom. If we had fought through the muck together who knows who you'd be?

FORDY

That choice was taken from me.

LAVINIA

No. The choice was taken from me. Besides you've chosen to stay here for a reason. Reasons I dare say not far from mine.

Lavinia has her on this and Fordy looks away again in shame, but Lavinia isn't smug but sympathetic. She places her hand on top of Fordy's and this time, Fordy doesn't pull away, finally accepting of her mother's touch.

FORDY

How much? - How much was enough for you to walk away from me for 27 years?

Fordy turns back and coldly snatches her hand away.

LAVINIA

Not enough, that's why I'm here. I need your help with something important.

FORDY

Help yourself.

LAVINIA

So far from the girl that slept in my bed until long after you'd learned your penmanship because you feared the dark.

FORDY

I wasn't *afraid* of the dark, I was afraid of what I might see in it thanks to you.

LAVINIA

What are you talking about?

FORDY

When I was young, I was on the floor in here, looking out the window. Imagining.

She points to the window and the distant tree trunks of the Tulgey Wood bulge like veins as if again responding.

FORDY

You wanted me to go upstairs with you. I didn't to and you said come before I see something I don't want to see.

LAVINIA

I said no such thing.

FORDY

You just used my love of window watching as a reason you didn't want me in a slum! At least when father does something he admits it! You said it and I never forgot as it was the first time I ever felt dread, the first blemish on a spotless mind that birthed many more. So besides your inability to be my mother, you left me no comfort only the opposite. So whatever you need, help yourself.

LAVINIA

If I told you I was still trying to help you again, would you believe me?

FORDY

Yes. But won't give you the chance to break my heart or my mind again.

LAVINIA

Then damn the heart my love, the truth is i'm to be evicted, i'm out of money.

FORDY

There it is.

LAVINIA

Yes, there it is. Your chance to keep me out of a slum and if you won't help me with whatever funds you can get out of your father at least give back your grandfather's watch so I can sell it.

FORDY

What watch?

LAVINIA

Don't play with me dear, it was the only thing of value my family had. He gave it to you on your birthday before he died.

FORDY

The one with the rabbit on it?

LAVINIA

Yes, it was quite expensive then, it must be nearing on priceless by now.

FORDY

I gave it to Margaret, a long time ago.

LAVINIA

Margaret?

FORDY

I found it to remind me more of you than grandfather, besides she seemed to really like it. I think she likes rabbits.

ESKELL (O/S)

Avast ye! A white whale!

Eskell yells boisterously as he stomps into the room.

LAVINIA

Shut it Eskell!

ESKELL

I will not! Least you can do is allow me to voice my displeasure when you go beaching yourself in my dining room!

FORDY

Not now.

ESKELL

Quickly my girl! Get your birthday harpoon! And fell this hulking-

LAVINIA

Why did you buy her a harpoon?

ESKELL

She's 40 years old, every woman needs a good harpoon! Especially now that whales are clearly evolving to walk on land-

FORDY

I'm not 40!

LAVINIA

She's not 40!

Eskell looks at Fordy and squints his eyes.

ESKELL

Isn't she? For all I know you're trimming years off her for your own vanity...

He reaches for Fordy and squishes her face in his hand, examining her from side to side then releases her but as soon as he lets go, she rubs her red pained cheeks.

ESKELL

Matter of fact. How old am I?! Wait!
Nevermind! The mystery is better us all!

Margaret returns and Lavinia glares as she sets down a with a steaming silver pot, at the center of the table.

ESKELL

Stop.

MARGARET

Sir?

ESKELL

Fucking my daughter!

FORDY

Jesus Christ! This again!

Eskell raises his hand to pause the conversation.

ESKELL

Is that coq au vin?! Better not be as much pepper in it as last time.

He sits down and grabs a pile of mashed potatoes from one pot and eats it like a hand-fruit, dirtying his beard as Fordy squeezes her rage into two iron candle holders.

ESKELL

Stop playing with those, you don't have the arm strength to bludgeon me properly.

Lavinia though was unmoved by the sordid accusation. That is until Margaret *oddly* looks her way as if reminding an actor of a forgotten line. Lavinia then storms her way and smacks Margaret. The sharp sound fills the room.

FORDY

Mother!

ESKELL
Dinner and a show!

Fordy rushes to Margaret but is waved off as Margaret scurries out to the foyer through the south archway.

LAVINIA
My love I don't begrudge you, that you could find something good in this place? This dreadfort. This monstrosity, aplomb the forest despite all vicissitude, like your darkest thought on your damndest day, offering none a step past grey. If anything I understand. I begrudge her because I called the bitch a friend for decades and she's fucking my daughter!

ESKELL
Practicing for your next poetry rag?

FORDY
We are not doing anything mother.

ESKELL
How wonderful to not be the only one being lied to! Welcome home Lavinia!

LAVINIA
Shut up Eskell!

ESKELL
Or! An idea! You could get the hell out!

LAVINIA
With pleasure!

INT. FOYER - AFTERNOON

7 Lavinia storms into to the foyer where she finds Margaret 7
seated on the main stairway leading upstairs.

LAVINIA
Give me the watch.

MARGARET
What watch?

LAVINIA
The girl said you had it.

MARGARET
She's mistaken, she has so very many things she can't keep track.

LAVINIA

You want to tell a story? I can tell stories too Margaret. One of a priceless watch stolen by a rummy old cook with no claim to it born in the Seven Dials when the Seven Dials was the Seven Dials and not a meaningless word for poverty, a cook who'll spend a decade in Holloway prison while praying they don't catch something that no medicine will cure.

Margaret bursts into tears. Lavinia takes pity and pats her shoulder, Margaret needfully nuzzles and kisses her hand and wrist. Lavinia sighs in open exasperation.

LAVINIA

Where has your shame gone?

MARGARET

I'm sorry.

LAVINIA

Where is the watch Margaret?

MARGARET

Why do you need it?

LAVINIA

The same reason you do, security. Only I don't have the option of hiding here. My rent is long overdue. I'll be homeless at the end of next week. And since either you couldn't or wouldn't sway that cunt in there after all this time on top of lying about my father's watch you're going to help me with this plan or I bring us all down together.

MARGARET

Lavi, please.

LAVINIA

Don't Lavi me, you're always choosing the path most comfortable much like you've done since we were kids, nothing changed.

MARGARET

Easiest path? I'm a bloody cook! You got to play the lady to a lord! And when you lived here I cooked all the meals while you lounged around fucking the gardener.

LAVINIA

And what do you do now? Cook and dine on the rose between Fordy's legs. I wonder how she'd feel finding out her mother taught you everything you do for her?

Margaret launches up from her seat on the stairs and punches Lavinia in the mouth, blood flows down her lip.

LAVINIA

You're as fucking stupid as she is, I was trying to protect you both, now come play along or i'll tell Fordy the truth today. I have nothing to lose, but you sure do.

Margaret tries to grab and stop her but Lavinia storms right back into the dining room with Margaret behind.

INT. DINING ROOM - AFTERNOON

LAVINIA

My mother passed.

FORDY

Grandmother's gone?

LAVINIA

Drop the act you hadn't seen her since the last time I took you to visit.

ESKELL

Why are you just now mentioning it?

LAVINIA

I had to tell Margaret first.

Lavinia looks back at Margaret who nods, supporting her.

FORDY

Why would Margaret care?

Eskell straightens up in his seat and nervously stammers.

ESKELL

She um, she used to work for your grandmother before she came work here.

Lavinia smirks at Eskell, bowing her head as if to thank him for upholding a shared secret between them.

LAVINIA

Quite, but remember my father is buried in the family cemetery in the woods.

ESKELL

Ah! Yes! The respect I had for that man, could shoot the beak off a woodpecker with one eye but since no one has tended to the grounds since your lover had the job, some brush may need to be cleared.

LAVINIA

Would you honor him then by paying for his wife's final services?

ESKELL

I'm honoring him by giving her a free grave plot instead of nothing at all.

LAVINIA

It's going to drain what is left of my limited funds even further if I have to.

ESKELL

We all have to deal with the outcome of our choices in this life, even you.

LAVINIA

Well then, I'm afraid, you'll have to see something else you don't want to dear.

Painting another needless psychological painting within Fordy's mind but Fordy doesn't take the bait this time.

FORDY

My condolences.

Lavinia sarcastically curtsies and leaves through the foyer. Margaret exits through the east corridor.

ESKELL

What was she talking to you about?

FORDY

She wants her father's watch so she can sell it, the money you paid her to leave me here seems to have finally run out.

ESKELL

I know, she's been sending letters begging for months but do not twist things my dear, I did not pay for you. I paid her to leave us alone. I wouldn't pay for something I already own.

FORDY

I'm not property.

ESKELL

I shot you from my cock didn't I?

FORDY

She gave birth to me.

ESKELL

You swam from my bollocks, into her.
Quite frankly i'm proud something so ugly
could make something so beautiful.

FORDY

So you won't help her?

ESKELL

Your mother? NO! Blame her for renting a
penthouse in Knightsbridge of all places!
She could have been frugal but no, only
the best for her. She's been rich longer
than poor, about time she remembered life
before she met me! But no I was talking
about my cock! It's quite ugly!

Eskell stands up, unbuckling his pants to prove his point
causing Fordy to cover her eyes and run out of the room.

BEN

Sir! Not at the table! Please!

Betts enters and tepidly approaches Ben and Eskell
standing there with his belt hanging unbuckled.

BETTS

Sir, I was listening to Margaret and
Lavinia in the foyer, they were arguing
about something, Margaret struck Lavinia.

ESKELL

Oh, it was dramatics over a funeral for
Lavinia's mother she was very close to
Margaret, don't worry yourself.

Betts takes her leave and Eskell looks over at Ben.

ESKELL

Took them long enough to try something,
the game's begun. On your toes old sport.

BEN

Yes sir.

INT. FORDY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Fordy is dressed for bed in a white nightgown, staring through a bay window toward the Tulgey Wood with gaps between the tree trunks blacker than the moonless night.

She drifts back into the dark room and lights a candle on the nightstand that illuminates the rococo carvings on the walnut headboard of her king bed that she pops down on with a book, "The Yellow wallpaper," by Charlotte Perkins Stetson but a thud comes from the wall. One she curiously doesn't react to as Margaret rises up beside the bed like a phantom in her own white nightgown.

MARGARET

Getting old for that laundry door.

Margaret leans over and kisses Fordy on the head then flops happily next to her on the bed and stretches.

MARGARET

He knows anyway.

FORDY

Where's the fun in surrender?

MARGARET

Everywhere if you let it.

Margaret pulls Fordy away from her book into a cuddle, snuggling up tightly behind Fordy, spooning her.

MARGARET

I love you.

FORDY

I love you too.

MARGARET

You're addicted to thinking.

FORDY

That sounds easily cured.

Fordy giggles until it's broken by sudden scowl.

FORDY

It itches.

MARGARET

On your tummy.

Fordy rolls onto her stomach and Margaret opens the nightstand, retrieving a bottle of camphor oil.

MARGARET

I'll always curse that damned thorn bush
you fell into. Biggest one i'd ever seen.

She unties the back of Fordy's nightgown, revealing three long claw-like keloid scars as Margaret gently whispers a comforting recite of an Emily Dickinson poem.

MARGARET

*The carriage held but just ourselves and
immortality. We slowly drove. We knew no
haste. And I had put away my labor...*

Changing it to fit this moment between them as she gently pours the soothing oil over the length of each scar.

MARGARET

The dewes drew quivering and chill.

Her fingers softly spread the oil, coating the scars.

MARGARET

For only gossamer her gown.

Margaret's fingertips tease the edges of the gown then slip to her shoulders and she kisses her behind the ear.

EXT. BOROGOVE MANOR - NIGHT

Every window dark but this one lone light in the night.

MARGARET (O/S)

*We paused before a house that seemed a
swelling of the ground - and in it, was
eternity that the two of us found.*

The candle goes out and this room joins the darkness.

INT. FORDY'S ROOM - MORNING

BANG, BANG, BANG! The door rattles on its hinges, Fordy wakes startled in bed and shakes Margaret awake as the light of morning shines through the window, giving clear view of the room full of what may be the most expensive furniture in the home. Not just the bed but dresser and wardrobe all carved with museum quality baroque patterns.

MARGARET

What is it?

FORDY

Someone's banging on-

CONSTABLE (O/S)
 It's Constable Plumb! I have a warrant!
 Signed and stamped by the magistrate
 himself, open the fucking door!

Margaret dives out of bed for the laundry door but it's jammed. She looks desperately up at Fordy and holds up the watch, solid gold with a white rabbit in vitreous enamel engraved on the cover, set in a floral relief.

MARGARET
 He's here for the watch.

FORDY
 Fucking give it to him then!

CONSTABLE (O/S)
 Open this door this instant or I'll kick
 it in with the full force of the law!

MARGARET
 It's too late for that! If he finds it in
 here either of us could go to prison.
 Lavinia must've reported it stolen. I
 didn't think she would do that to you.

FORDY
 To me? I told her you had it!

MARGARET
 He's going to search me then! I need you
 to hide it, there's no time! I can't go
 to prison! Especially not Holloway!

Margaret stands back up.

MARGARET
 Turn around.

FORDY
 For what?

MARGARET
 Your bum, it's the only place. Do you
 want me to go to prison? I'll die there!

FORDY
 God damn it Margaret.

Fordy begrudgingly bends over the bed. Margaret puts a hand over her mouth and the other reaches under her nightgown. Seconds later the door flies open and **THE CONSTABLE** enters, if 50, he doesn't look a day under 70.

A gaunt face festooned with a salt and pepper mutton-chop beard broken by patches of syphilis sores as his sunken eyes glare over the bed at Fordy with her hands on her hips blushing bright as a berry with Margaret beside.

MARGARET

I was helping her decide on an outfit.

CONSTABLE

I don't give a fuck! I have a warrant to find the most prized possession of Lady Lavinia Luthgate. Her father's watch!

ESKELL (O.S.)

How did you get a warrant so quickly?!

Eskell asks as he barges into the room, the Constable whips the warrant out of his coat and Ben snatches it.

CONSTABLE

Your wronged Mrs said time was of the essence or the *time* piece may be lost.

BEN

This isn't a warrant! This is a note from Lavinia! Says the funeral is in two days.

CONSTABLE

Flip it over!

Ben flips it over, seeing the formal warrant in detail.

ESKELL

So she sicks the law on her own child!
And she's no longer my Mrs or a Borogove!
She's a peasant as she deserves to be!

CONSTABLE

You know what Borogove?

The Constable steps up to Eskell who clenches his fists.

ESKELL

What?

CONSTABLE

I like peasants. I consider myself one,
but i'm a powerful feckin' peasant.

He smacks the badge on his chest and points at Fordy then at Margaret without ever taking his eyes off of Eskell.

CONSTABLE

I have right to search both of em' and their rooms. Ladies, hands on the walls.

ESKELL

Whatever part of that diseased vessel of consciousness that is your body touches my child, I'll put on a necklace she'll stick in a shoe box and forget just like the piece of tin and quartz you're after.

CONSTABLE

A threat against a constable?! Don't care how much coin you got Borogove. I'll see you all hang. Margey is it? You first. I'm searching every crevice you got.

He pushes past Fordy, nearly knocking her over as he charges right at Margaret who cowers against the wall.

ESKELL

Watch and lean dear.

Eskell grabs the candle holder off the nightstand and is about to bash the Constable in the back of the head when Fordy snatches it to stop before the Constable notices.

BEN

This warrant is for premises, not person!

The Constable grits his rotten teeth in disappointment.

CONSTABLE

Good eye. But if I don't find it. I'm coming back for the both of you bitches.

Margaret runs out past Ben and Fordy follows, dragging Eskell with her to stop him from catching a murder case as the Constable tears the room apart, starting with the wardrobe drawers scattering clothing, jewelry and more.

CONSTABLE

Where is it?!

He then tries to lift the heavy bed frame but barely gets it off the ground and drops it on his foot. Yelling right as Fordy's doll Tabitha falls to the floor, her beloved old brunette doll in a sky blue dress landing face up.

CONSTABLE

You think that's funny? You don't laugh at the law! You don't laugh at me!

Ben peeks in, seeing the Constable yelling at the doll as if it were alive then draw a knife and rip through the pillows in a mad rage. No logic to his deranged search.

CONSTABLE

I know you're hiding it! Fucking, dirty, rich bitch! You're hiding it from me and having a fucking laugh! I need the pay I was promised for this and I'll have it! I swear I will! I swear! I will! I will!

Ben's eyes widen as he watches the Constable take out a vial of cocaine, snort it and tremble in euphoria then grab the doll and dementedly toss it back onto the bed.

CONSTABLE

I'll show you how dirty you are, I bet you'll talk then! They always do!

He's about to step in but stops upon seeing the crazed Constable open his pants and mount the doll, humping like a dog while throwing his head back in psychotic pleasure.

CONSTABLE

Willy's always the key to them confessions, this never fails!

Ben watches in disgust from the doorway as the Constable squeals to a quick orgasm, wipes his brow and readies himself to piss on the doll and bed. Forcing Ben to make a call *on the fly* to reel in the drug fueled madman.

BEN

You're right! She's hiding it!

The Constable's head pivots his way and he scurries over like a starvin rat to a crumb of stale bread.

CONSTABLE

Where!? Tell me? Tell me!

BEN

Out there.

Ben points to the window and out to the Tulgey Wood and the bleakest opening between the baleful old trees, one somehow an impossible black even in the forenoon light.

BEN

She and her lover, the cook have their little dates in the woods.

CONSTABLE

She's fucking the chef?

BEN
Vigorously as you and Tabitha.

CONSTABLE
Tabitha?

BEN
The doll.

CONSTABLE
Oh, oh right.

BEN
They've likely hid it out there as they plan to run off. They'll surely go get it tonight after all this, but if you ask them now they'll certainly lie, you have to come back tonight and catch them.

CONSTABLE
Christ i'd never have found it but fuck you want to help me for? What's in it for you? You lookin' for a cut? Cause I ain't-

BEN
I'm a peasant, just like you. And maybe I'd like to see another hard working peasant punish a snotty little princess.

CONSTABLE
Oh i'll punish her good, you'll hear her screams from here. I'll be back after nightfall but if this is a trick. I'll punish you a thousand times worse boyo.

The Constable slaps Ben on the ass and walks out. Ben follows the Constable down to the foyer to make sure that the scoundrel actually leaves and as soon as the front doors shut Ben races straight to the parlor room.

INT. PARLOR ROOM - MORNING

It's a room a lot like the dining room, minus the gigantic windows with a brilliant cherry oak living room set, exquisite grand piano left and a fireplace to the right. He pauses seeing Eskell on the couch with Fordy on a pillow holding a jar of chamomile salve under his nose.

BEN
Fordy! I need to speak to you!

Eskell jumps to his feet and knocks Fordy to the floor, she curses, landing on her ass and the watch inside it.

ESKELL

Let me see what happened! Did he at least find the damned watch after that ruckus!?

BEN

We'll get to that, but Fordy please don't return to your room yet, perhaps you and Margaret could go out for the evening?

ESKELL

Out? Together?! Have you lost your mind?

Fordy takes this opportunity to get up and run out, Eskell tries to pursue but Ben grabs his wrist.

BEN

We really need to speak!

Eskell gives up the chase but yells after her.

ESKELL

Tell Margaret to make my brunch by brunch time! Or I swear i'll kick that door in! And i'll be the one seeing something I don't want to! But I swear I will!

Referencing what Lavinia said then he turns back to Ben.

ESKELL

I'd rather not but you see a threat isn't a threat unless you see it through.

BEN

Listen! The Constable is insane. He's on cocaine and God knows what else! He must be stopped and tonight when he returns!

ESKELL

Oh *now* I have to make this my evening all because Fordy wouldn't let me kill him when I was in the mood! As if she's never been threatened! We get threat letters! Remember the girl she shoved off a carriage at rotten row when she was a child. Girl was all left feet, it was a mercy! Apparently her father had passed so their bloodline ended because of it, how's that Fordy or my fault? Dumb lit-

BEN

He violated Tabitha!

ESKELL

He did what!?

BEN

In his drug blinded rage he took out his pudgy prick and seeded on her! Now he's coming to the graveyard tonight with the intent to violate Fordy. Get the watch and possibly fuck me in celebration!

ESKELL

Christ here and in Heaven! What in the bloody hell did you say to the man?!

BEN

I had to think fast! Lavinia sent a raving rapist lunatic after Fordy! The man fucked a doll in front of me and has the authority to vanquish me with the very gun on his hip! I did the best I could for you! For this house! I always do! I deserve apprécier damn it!

Eskell smacks Ben, he gasps and Eskell shushes him by passionately kissing him on the lips. He gazes intensely into his eyes and cups his face in his strong hands.

ESKELL

Listen to me. No one under my watch is getting fucked tonight or any night. Let the son of a bitch come, we'll be ready. For tonight old friend, we hunt man.

Betts coughs, making herself known in the doorway.

BETTS

I take it I should burn Tabitha then?

BEN

It was orange.

ESKELL

What was orange?

BEN

His semen looked like the orange defensive bile of a lady bug.

Eskell gags, Betts laughs then gags as well, Ben follows suit. The chain reaction getting a laugh out of Eskell.

ESKELL

Burn it and get the Gamages catalog to order her a new one. I need to prepare.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Fordy is walking as quickly as one can with an heirloom watch up their butt down a hallway far darker than it should be with a window at the end lacking any curtains.

She stops in front of a closed door to the left and grabs the knob, but the floor creaks, startling her. She turns to the now pitch black window, as if something large had covered it from the outside. The immediate and awful reality of it demanding a sensible answer to escape the sanity shattering ones filling her mind. So she steps into the darkness, approaching the window and the sound of breathing that she hopes is her own or hallucination.

But just as she is about to place her hand against the blackened glass, the floor creaks again. Her head jerks to the right. Nothing is there but a dead end nook with a marble plant stand and no plant. She turns back around as the dark veil lifts and darts away with brain-sickening sentience toward the Tulgey Wood, allowing the morning light to bathe her face and fill the hall as she teeters backwards in fright and anxiously runs back to the door.

INT. MARGARET'S ROOM - MORNING

The door flies open, Margaret screams. Fordy screams.

MARGARET

You nearly scared me to death!

Margaret turns, fixing her hair at the vanity and squints over the metal framed queen bed, less impressive than Fordy's as is the whole windowless room far yet cozier with the ruffled cream duvet with embroidered flowers and pillows. Knitted doilies draping the vanity, dresser, nightstand and green tufted chair holding a box of yarn and walls hand painted with colorful songbirds.

MARGARET

What happened?

FORDY

I saw something outside, something big,
are there bears around here?

MARGARET

There aren't bears in England, dear. Now
come on you need to get that thing out.

FORDY

Somehow i'd actually forgotten.

Fordy slogs to the other side of the bed and flops down face first. Margaret casually reaches back under her nightgown as Fordy grits her teeth and clenches.

MARGARET

Relax, your bum is like a vice.

FORDY

Well are you looking for a lung?!

MARGARET

Almost got it.

ESKELL (O/S)

What did I say?!

Eskell is standing in the doorway staring daggers.

ESKELL

I warned you!

Margaret freezes, right hand under Fordy's nightgown then quickly stands, forgetting her fingers are stuck in her literally tight ass, pulling her up like a hooked fish.

FORDY

Stop! Stop! Stop!

Her hand pops free and Fordy falls right back on the bed.

ESKELL

Seeing all sorts I wished not to!

MARGARET

Sir! I was simply-

Eskell comes right in and yanks the duvet from the bed around Fordy like she'd been put in Santa's sack and he throws her over his shoulder while glowering at Margaret.

ESKELL

You may retrieve this once you've served me my damn brunch! Get to work!

FORDY

I'll be hanging from a chandelier.

ESKELL

No you won't! If you're going to commit suicide you'll do it with a gun like any man of substance. No poison either!

FORDY

I'm not a man!

ESKELL

You're whatever you wish to be my boy!
God knows I have the money for it!

Eskell carries her out. Margaret sighs wearily. Then
sucks her finger clean of Fordy and follows after them.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The sun shines through high angled clerestory windows
onto a baronial black coal oven in a kitchen that shows
its age with a worn cobblestone floor. Margaret enters
and opens the cupboard on the left, inside are stacks of
chocolate Cadbury bars. But she instead wrestles a twine
box from below them and brings it to the scullery table
center room along with an eagle claw shaped iron stand of
some sort. She sets both down and opens the box, tossing
aside the packing and gently lifts out an ostrich egg.

So opalescent in contrast to the grungy kitchen it glows
in the sun as she sets it carefully in the stand. Only to
draw a meat mallet from her apron and viciously smash the
egg open, hunks of shell fall into the yellow liquid and
she plugs the hole with three slices of sally lunn bread.

INT. ESKELL'S OFFICE - DAY

Eskell is behind his desk reading the London Times, the
date: March 3, 189- with his thumb over the last number.

The left of the double doors swings open. Margaret brings
in the egg in holder and sets it on the desk. He hungrily
grabs the bread and takes a sloppy bite, yolk drips down
his beard. Margaret hurries out, disgusted by the sight.

ESKELL

Run along and finish off my daughter.

As she leaves in walks Ben, they share a nod as they pass
one another. Ben turns back to shut and lock the doors.

ESKELL

Every day she doesn't poison me, I lose a
bit more respect for that woman.

BEN

If she did, my vengeance would be swift.

ESKELL

No, you'll let it go. I won't have you
hang for something so trivial.

BEN

Sir, your life isn't trivial to me.

ESKELL

Noted. Go dig the hole.

Eskell thumbs back to the window and out to the foul foliage of the Tulgey Wood that sways in the distance.

Ben bows his head turns to leave just as Eskell lifts the ostrich egg and begins gulping down the yolk. He turns to look back at Eskell slurping as it trails messily down his chin in shameless decadence. He grows flustered, hot and bothered by Eskell being so unapologetic in what he enjoys like a hedonist though Eskell wouldn't know the definition but Ben does and that's what matters.

Because Ben enjoys being one of his pleasures, yearning to throw himself at his feet and service him while he finishes that sickeningly indulgent drink. Eskell is strong, virile and unabashedly masculine. A contrast of the proper, elegant Ben who is the velvet to Eskell's leather. Which is what has excited and kept Ben at his side for so long. Not money, but his role, his place here. This is Ben's kink before him. Eskell lowers the egg and burps. His eyes find Ben's, he recognizes the look. He knowingly and teasingly licks his lips clean.

ESKELL

You've had your treat this morning,
there's not a drop left for you. Go dig
the hole before the Constable arrives!

The yell startles Ben and he hurries out the door.

EXT. BALCONY - AFTERNOON

The sun has retreated behind the clouds, leaving an ashen sky over the Tulgey Wood that stretches into the fog as Fordy surveys it from the stone balcony overlooking the rear grounds, while seated in a white iron chair, still wrapped in Margaret's duvet, free of the stuffy manor.

BETTS (O.S.)

Tabitha is no more.

Fordy looks back to see Betts at the white table, placing a plate of shortbread petticoat tails onto a gold rim saucer before pouring steaming earl gray tea into the matching countess cup from a staffordshire teapot that draws her eye with an intricate blue etching of a gryphon and turtle that seem in deep debate on a lonely beach.

Fordy sighs, stuffing Tabitha away with so many other disappointments in the past of her wearied being.

FORDY

The cushion?

BETTS

Oh, i'm sorry, forgot I was holding it.

Betts hands over the blue mushroom shaped cushion she'd had tucked under her arm. Fordy puts it under her butt.

FORDY

Bring me a pen and paper, please.

Betts leaves. Fordy takes sip of tea then dips a biscuit and takes a bit then tosses it over the balcony. Betts soon returns with a pen and sheets of foolscap paper. Fordy takes them and jots down a note carelessly in her lap, not even using the table, then hands it back.

FORDY

Give it to Margaret, for tonight. I'll know if you read it so don't.

She heads back in as Fordy sinks down into the chair and closes her eyes. But off in the distance a figure moves through the tall grass toward the unwelcoming Tulgey Wood carrying a shovel and duffle-bag, it's Ben heading to the family graveyard within to begin Eskell's deadly plan.

EXT. TULGEY WOOD - NIGHT

A new figure replaces Ben, masked by the scud of fog shrouding the ground, they struggle through the cocksfoot weeds toward the antediluvian Tulgey Wood but stop to look back to the manor's lights shining through the fog brume with every window lit, like a prison on alert in the drowse of this nocturne. That very light reveals the face of the Constable, hungry to sate his vile desires.

But when he turns back to the Tulgey Wood, he anxiously pulls tight his coat at its odious sight. The grotesque primeval forest not full of shadows but an abyssal black as if nothing could exist behind the foreboding trees.

Trees standing like monolithic sentries before a gate not to hell but worse in it's incomprehensibly. What forest is silent at night? One full of every awful thing the mind dare not broach, the only reward would be madness. Not a cricket chirps. This forest is dead alive.

He sees a root mass beneath the nighest tree as a hideous monster opening it's jaws to swallow him into a gullet hole. Rationality fails, he pulls a pistol from his coat.

BEN (O.S.)

In here!

He jolts and drops his gun, losing it in the tall grass and when he looks again, the root mass is just a gnarled bosk of branches, no tree had lifted monstrosly from the ground to create a tartarean maw. As that's impossible. The Constable steadies himself and pushes on in through the branches that claw and scrape at his unnerved face.

INT. TULGEY WOOD

The Constable enters the Tulgey Wood with bloodied cheeks and is directly met by a flickering orange light turning the trees in front of him into the only visible things within the blackness filling his peripheral view.

BEN (O.S.)

They're coming soon!

He runs toward the light and trips over the sinking gravestone of Alice Borogove, landing on his stomach staring at the lifeless eyes of Tabitha, Fordy's doll, propped in front of another gravestone beside a closed back directional lantern with more darkness behind it.

CONSTABLE

Fuck is this? Some joke?!

The Constable grabs the doll and stands up, observing the new white dress she's now wearing as Her eyes seem to eerily follow him with a hint of fury. He then notices something by the lantern that had fallen over, a bottle of Laphroaig scotch whiskey with a note attached to it by a knotted piece of twine. The note reads: "DRINK ME."

THE CONSTABLE

Where are you boyo?! Get me sozzled enough, I might let you fuck me instead!

He laughs, pulls the cork and guzzles the whiskey until he comes up for air with a burp, he staggers back and in a flash is pulled off his feet and turned upside down. Hung from a branch in the canopy like captured prey.

CONSTABLE

AHHH! What the fuck?!

The lantern mysteriously lifts as Eskell climbs out of an open grave that had been shrouded in the dark behind it.

ESKELL

Wasn't much of a hunt, may as well have been hunting a mange riddled coyote. A snare trap? I was hoping for more.

CONSTABLE

Borogove?! What the hell are you doing? I'm a constable! Release me at once!

ESKELL

Not the Borogove you were seeking I take it? You like the easy prey do you?

Ben steps out of the brush, Eskell hands him the lantern. The Constable twists helplessly to look towards him.

CONSTABLE

You! You fucking traitor! You lying louse! He promised me he'd help me fuck your daughter! He said he wanted a turn!

ESKELL

So it's true then?

CONSTABLE

It's no less than the thieving cunt deserves. Who steals from her mother? One that needs be taught a long hard lesson!

ESKELL

Funny you say that, you most certainly seem like a man who's stolen from a mother or dozens, but in regard to the teaching of lessons and my dear Fordy that's not for you to decide, ever.

CONSTABLE

I'm a fucking constable you pompous slug! You fucking toff! I decide the way things go! I decide which rich cunt gets fuck-

Eskell punches him in the ribs and he vomits the whiskey upside down, wriggling as it goes up his nose.

CONSTABLE

Ah God it fucking burns!

Eskell tucks his hands behind his back and squares his shoulders confidently, head high but looking low.

ESKELL

Do I seem like a man who would allow any facet of my daughter's life, my heir. To be affected in any way by a man of your ilk. You may as well be another species.

CONSTABLE

Fuck you!

ESKELL

I actually was going to fuck you. Seeing as how that was clearly your intention with my daughter. An eye for an eye, only part of me her mother seemed not to mind.

Eskell kneels down, grabs his hair and whispers.

ESKELL

Mine either.

CONSTABLE

Your own mother?! You're the sick one!

The Constable struggles upside down, grabbing at Eskell but Eskell stands back up and knees him in the ribs. The Constable wheezes with cracked ribs like a broken kazoo and his handcuffs drop from his coat to the ground.

ESKELL

As I was saying, I'm not going to fuck you because I'm sure you have a venereal disease i'd rather not have seep into me much like a candiru fish. Besides you seemed too eager for it with Ben. I'm doling out punishment, not funishment.

He grabs the handcuffs and yanks the Constable's arms behind his back, Eskell smirks proudly as he locks them.

ESKELL

So instead i'm going to do something worse with a bit of turnabout since I'm sure you were going to use these on my daughter, isn't that right my *good* man?

Eskell picks up Tabitha and props her back against Alice's gravestone, her mouth showing signs of a smirk.

ESKELL

You can thank our guest Tabitha, here to witness her much deserved revenge and playing a brilliant hand I might add.

CONSTABLE

You're fucking mad! You're crazy!

ESKELL

No Constable. I'm very clear, a bit too clear I'm afraid because I see you for what you are and *what* you are is no good for me, my daughter or anyone. I mean at the very least you aren't worthy of that badge, what man of law or substance is caught and rendered helpless so easily?

CONSTABLE

You don't know a thing about me!

ESKELL

I know you're an addict, I know you're a rapist, I know where you're *going* to be buried. I know, a whole lot about you.

CONSTABLE

Wait! We can work this out!

ESKELL

No sir I don't believe we can. You were dead the moment you touched my daughter's bedroom door with your ogreish knuckles.

Ben reaches into a knothole of a tree, retrieving a pair of blacksmith's gloves and a brass blowtorch with gears.

CONSTABLE

Wait! What is that!?

ESKELL

Need to burn the sickness out.

Eskell yanks the upside down Constable's pants up, using his belt to keep them up then he takes the gloves from Ben and puts them on. Ben hands Eskell the blowtorch.

CONSTABLE

Listen! You can't! Wait! I have money!

ESKELL

Of course I can and you've seen my house.

Eskell looks over his shoulder and the lush branches part with a slow sentience as if listening, revealing the manor lights glimmering through the heavy haze of fog.

ESKELL

I don't want for coin.

He turns back and the crack in the trees snap shut, trapping the terrible scene again in darkness that is lessened by the aflicker lantern that Ben holds over it.

CONSTABLE

Anything but this! You can fuck me! Both of you! I'll suck your cocks! Please!

ESKELL

I don't want for that either.

Ben bites his bottom lip as he moves the lantern closer.

ESKELL

Well...I did tell you whatever part of you touched her i'd put on a necklace and it looked to me like your left shoulder, left hip, so your arm and leg at least.

CONSTABLE

What?!

ESKELL

Would you rather! I avenge my daughter or Tabitha?! Fordy takes your arm and leg, Tabitha takes your pudgy little cock. These are your only choices constable!

CONSTABLE

There is always another choice!

ESKELL

No! Not this time! I am finality! I am your judge, jury and executioner! Me!

Spit flies from Eskell's lips, suddenly in a blind fury.

CONSTABLE

The magistrate knows i'm here! You both will hang! Let me go and i'll forget all about this! I'll work for you!

ESKELL

Does he know you came back here in the dead of night to rape my child?! Besides if he did no one ever finds anything in these woods. It won't let them!

The Constable's eyes widen, he weeps for his sad life. Eskell grabs his cock and balls with gloved hands and turns the blowtorch on. A blinding white hot flame beams out so pure in color it cries of Heaven and not hell.

ESKELL (O/S)

Cock it is!

Eskell gets to work as the Constable screeches. Ben nearly vomits. Not wanting Eskell to see his resolve break but this is a new brutality in the face of the many he has witnessed with him. A man is being cooked alive.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

The Constable's screams echo from the Tulgey Wood, waking Fordy in the kind of discomfort ones get from falling asleep on an iron chair with a priceless watch up your ass, mushroom cushion or no. She gets up, drops the duvet and groggily heads back inside the house wiping her eyes.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The candles of the diamond chandeliers above the table are lit, casting warm romantic light below as Margaret carries in a chocolate triple layer cake, setting it among the plates of chocolate cookies and a deep bowl of chocolate pots de crème set at the right head of the table which is where Fordy takes her seat.

MARGARET

Finally. Now why in the world did you ask me to cook all this? Was this punishment?

FORDY

No unfortunately.

MARGARET

Then why would you-

Betts walks from the foyer, dressed in a black evening cloak that wouldn't look out of place on an assassin, while carrying two shopping over bags to the table.

BETTS

This is why you sent me all the way to London to get a fucking oil? You cunts!

MARGARET

Bettany!

BETTS

Shut up! The carriage driver kept on, smelled like lavender water and shite! I go do your bidding and you throw a date night for yourselves? Fuck right off!

FORDY

That is not why I sent you. I need that.

Fordy points at the smaller bag and Betts hands it over.

MARGARET

What is it?

FORDY

Croton oil.

MARGARET

You can't drink that!

FORDY

The food won't do the job alone.

BETTS

What is it exactly?

Betts takes her cloak off and lays it over a chair back.

MARGARET

A violent purgative.

BETTS

A what?

FORDY

Makes you shit and or throw up.

BETTS

Dare I ask why?

FORDY

There's a cork in my butt.

BETTS

Dare I ask why again?

MARGARET

It wasn't a cork!

FORDY

If you put it in a cork contest I bet you
I bet it'd place, i've tried to shit it
out three times today Margaret!

BETTS

Your sex life is terrifying.

FORDY

This had nothing to do with sex!

MARGARET

Would you like me to check again?

FORDY

No, I've had quite enough of your fat laborer's fingers for a lifetime.

MARGARET

Hey!

FORDY

Betts, come here, use your soft little dusting hands for something useful.

BETTS

This is all happening very fast.

FORDY

As does life. Grab it and me by the arse.

Fordy stands up, grips the edge of the table and arches her back obnoxiously while Betts seems momentarily hypnotized by Fordy's ass. All of this framed by the monumental windows like the Last Supper with the foggy grounds and Tulgey Wood lurking in the distance.

FORDY

This is your punishment Margaret, stand right there and watch her enter me.

MARGARET

You actually think I care?

FORDY

Betts get away.

BETTS

Boo.

FORDY

Forget it, just sit, join me, let's eat, she's made enough for all of us. May as well enjoy some peace with the bastards gone, maybe this will work tonight.

Fordy sits back down at the right table head, Betts takes a seat to Fordy's left and Margaret at her right hand. If she were to think hard enough, it could be symbolic.

FORDY

Dig in ladies.

Betts doesn't wait to go for a chocolate cookie while Fordy dives into the pots de crème, hungrily shoveling it into her mouth while Margaret opts to take a load off and pours herself a glass of port wine and takes a slow sip.

INT. TULGEY WOOD

Peeking back in through the branches, Eskell is still intently cooking cock, white hot flame searing as the upside down Constable swings gently in a silent wind.

ESKELL

Hand me the jar.

Ben reaches into the knothole again and this time pulls out a jar, Eskell yanks off and plops in the burned black cock then tosses the jar back to Ben who catches it and places it down near Tabitha. Her revenge complete, the smirk now gone. If it were ever there at all.

ESKELL

Ash it into a keepsake, put it on a necklace and then give it to Fordy.

BEN

Excuse me a moment, restroom.

Eskell uses the bone knife he killed Joyo with to cut the Constable down, he falls so hard he wakes screaming in agony since his cock has been burned off, Eskell kicks him into the open grave as he goes on screaming.

ESKELL

Quiet! You brought it on yourself! Who the hell did you think you were dealing with? Now you know, you'll always know!

The Constable screams on as Ben opens his pants by the knothole tree and begins to urinate while Eskell over his shoulder kicks dirt in the hole, muffling the screams.

BEN

I'm not sure Fordy really wants-

The sound of his urine stream stops, replaced by a wet suckling sound. Ben's head turns in shock and horror.

BEN

AAAAHHHHHH!

His scream is so sudden, Eskell draws his pistol.

ESKELL

What is it man?!

Looking up at Ben is a humanoid face tearing free of catlike fur with piss dripping from wiry whiskers and matted fur covered in dirt and twigs in the shape of an overweight man. A reasonable mind may argue it a costume but if so. It had fused with his skin and that wouldn't explain the paws, twitching cat ears or massive tail wagging back and fourth as Ben stumbles screaming backwards, landing on his ass. It's **THE CHESHIRE CAT**.

Eskell lifts the lantern right in time to see a wide grin of sharklike teeth stretching beyond the face of this furry fiend that charges him like a lion with impossible speed and limp arms following his rapid feet, so horrendously unnatural it terrifies even this great hunter. Eskell drops the lantern. It breaks.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Betts, Fordy and Margaret are still seated and have made a staggering amount of progress on the chocolate cake.

BANG! BANG! BANG!...BANG! Gunfire echoes and flashes from within the Tulgey Wood outside the window, they all turn to look but it's only Betts and Margaret seem concerned.

MARGARET

What's happening out there?

FORDY

Oh i'm sure it's *something*.

BETTS

Shouldn't we call someone?

FORDY

Who? And for what?

They all laugh.

INT. TULGEY WOOD

The forest is now pitch black and Eskell is scrambling backwards on the ground shooting blindly into the dark.

The gun clicks empty and the Cheshire Cat's horridly wide grin and glowing teeth hovers above him in the air and then vanishes, leaving mere darkness behind until the smile suddenly reappears right behind him. Eskell roars in fear refusing to allow a scream. *Clang!* The smile drops to the ground and goes out like a light.

The darkness lifts, moonlight shining down from above, revealing Ben standing over the face down Cheshire with a bent shovel. Eskell gets up and breathlessly approaches.

ESKELL

Good work, Good work Benjamin. Bloody hell. Now, you mad bastard! Wake up!

Eskell kicks him onto his back, empty black skull holes are now where eyes should be. Ben and Eskell recoil as the Cheshire's body melts into a pool of purple muck, blood and bile into the forest floor, feeding the fauna.

CHESHIRE CAT (O/S)

We're all mad here.

The grin appears in the black space between two trees. Eskell pulls Ben behind him and quickly reloads his gun as the Cheshire's disembodied smile floats towards them.

ESKELL

What the fuck are you!?

BEN

Why did you drink my piss?!

ESKELL

Focus! It isn't like you haven't been sucked off by a stranger before!

CHESHIRE CAT

*I'll tell thee everything I can.
There's little to relate.*

The Cheshire speaks without moving his grinning mouth as his body reappears standing before them. He begins mixing up Lewis Carroll's poetry to explain his *ways and means*.

CHESHIRE CAT

*I met there an aged man, upon the lonely
moor. I knew that he was a gentleman but
he was but a bore. He stopped and roughly
questioned me, come and tell me how you
live! I said I look for soap bubbles that
lie among the wheat. I bake them into
mutton-pies and sell them on the street.*

The Cheshire bows as the Tulgey Wood comes to life,
branches shaking unnervingly without any breeze.

CHESHIRE CAT
A trifle if you please.

BEN
Perhaps he's a magician? That Lavinia
hired him to scare us? To distract us?

ESKELL
Good thinking.

Eskell aims his gun steadily at the Cheshire Cat.

ESKELL
I'm not giving you one shilling, no
matter how good your nonsense pies are,
likely flavored of feces and the damp!

CHESHIRE CAT
*But I was thinking of a plan to dye one's
whiskers green, so much the color of the
grass that they could never be seen.*

BEN
What if he's been living out here, look
at his fur, how long have you been-

The grass darts up unnaturally and flails like tendrils.

ESKELL
Enough of these tricks!

Eskell steps forward and strikes the Cheshire on the head
with his gun. He doesn't even flinch but the grass falls
back down to it's natural state at the moment of impact.

CHESHIRE CAT
*He cried come now! Tell me how you live!
And thumped me on the head!*

The poetic story from the Cheshire being topical shakes
Eskell. Now considering he's being scripted himself.

CHESHIRE CAT
*And I said I go my ways I go my ways I go
a ways I go always my ways away a maze
aways always my ways I go a ways away I
go my ways my maze and when I find a
mountain-rill I set it ablaze.*

BEN

He's talking about the manor! He's going to burn the manor down!? Is that it you foul piss drinking little cretin!?

ESKELL

Is my daughter in danger? Tell me or i'll do far worse than you saw me do already!

CHESHIRE CAT

But I was thinking of a way to feed oneself on batter! And to go on from day to day, getting a little fatter!

BEN

He's stealing batter from the kitchen?!

ESKELL

This is ridiculous!

Eskell tosses the gun to the Ben who nearly drops it and grabs the Cheshire's shoulders, shaking him angrily.

ESKELL

The truth damn you!

CHESHIRE CAT

I shook him well from side to side! Until his face was blue! Come and tell me how you live and what it is you do!

Eskell's begins choking him in frustration to no affect.

CHESHIRE CAT

I hunt for HADDOCKS' EYES! Among the heather bright, I sometimes dig for buttered rolls. I sometimes search the grassy knolls for wheels of hansom cabs.

He lets go, the Cheshire falls onto his back with a thud.

ESKELL

I get it now.

BEN

You do?

ESKELL

Whatever he is. He's insane but honest.

The Cheshire rises back up as if lifted by invisible strings, his grin again aglow, Eskell takes the gun back from Ben who picks up Tabitha and retreats behind Eskell.

CHESHIRE CAT

*If ever by chance I put my fingers into
glue! Or madly squeeze a right hand foot
into a left hand shoe!*

Eskell's jaw tightens with his gun at the ready as the smiling Cheshire keeps talking with his unmoving mouth.

CHESHIRE CAT

*Or if I drop upon my toe! A very heavy
weight! I weep for it reminds me so of
that old man I used to know! Whose look
was mild, whose speech was slow! Whose
hair was whiter than the snow! Whose face
was very like a crow! With eyes like
cinders all aglow!"*

The Cheshire using Lewis Carroll's words to call out Eskell, his determined gaze turns to fearful realization.

ESKELL

I...

A black mist quickly swallows up the trees, graves and Cheshire, leaving just his floating grin before blotting out the moonlight entirely, leaving them surrounded by the uniquely putrid sort of dark that the Constable saw.

CHESHIRE CAT

*Who seemed distracted with his woe as I
matched him blow for blow! Who rocked his
body to and fro and muttered mumblingly
low. As if his mouth were full of dough,
who snorted like a buffalo.*

Eskell's eyes narrow as his resolve returns, he pulls away from Ben and trudges into the darkness that was once the Tulgey Wood and aims at the Cheshire's glowing grin.

CHESHIRE CAT

That summer evening long ago.

Eskell fires a shot at the grin, the darkness drops like a curtain and the Tulgey Wood returns as the Cheshire's body reappears around his ghastly grin now with a bloody bullet wound in his cheek. He falls limply onto his back. Eskell and Ben look down at him with Tabitha drooping forward in Ben's arms as if getting her own look.

CHESHIRE CAT

*Or if a statement I aver of
which I am not sure.*

Ben shrieks seeing that he's still alive and speaking with that obdurately unshakable grin. Though Eskell is also unmoved, keeping the gun pointed right at him.

CHESHIRE CAT

*I think of that strange wanderer.
Upon the lonely moor.*

The grin finally fades and like any natural thing after being shot in the face, the Cheshire Cat dies. Eskell kicks him to be sure but the Cheshire is as motionless as the Tulgey Wood that has regained a quotidian calm equal to any normal forest under moonlight in a spring night.

ESKELL

Pack up, we're done here.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Betts passes Margaret a bottle of Tokay wine while Fordy pours a tiny bit of croton oil on a cookie and eats it.

FORDY

Now we wait.

BETTS

Well you could have let me help instead,
but because it wouldn't upset Margaret.

FORDY

You were looking forward to it?

BETTS

No! But it's nice to be involved, I'm all alone here. You two have each other and your father has Ben. I'm alone most days.

FORDY

Oh God. My mother brought that up too, am I the only one that hasn't noticed?

BETTS

Well, I saw Eskell kiss him.

FORDY

What?! Are you sure?

MARGARET

Don't make up stories! We would know.

BETTS

Why would I make that up?

FORDY

If it is, hypocritical bastard shouldn't say another word about me and Margaret.

MARGARET

Unfortunately it isn't.

Margaret covering for Ben but Fordy grimaces and brings her hand to her stomach, feeling something already.

EXT. TULGEY WOOD - NIGHT

The Tulgey Wood stands stalwart in concealment of the scene within despite a sudden breeze that sharply clears the fog blanket from the grounds as Eskell steps out into the grassy clearing. The branches tease their erstwhile sentience by tugging at his shoulders as if to keep him. Then instead gently part for Ben who is carrying the leather bag but far too lost in thought to notice, he pauses a yard or so from the forest. Eskell takes note of his shaken state and softly clutches his hand, leading Ben toward the well lit manor in a loving quiet.

BEN

What did we just see?

ESKELL

Let it fade into uncertainty or it will make you question things you can't answer and you may never escape the compulsion to question everything no matter how trivial. It infests you, it will become so familiar you can't do without it.

BEN

But sir.

Eskell stops and points back at the Tulgey Wood.

ESKELL

It'll drive you mad.

He takes the bag and opens it, then hands Tabitha to Ben who hugs the doll like an anchor to his soft sanity.

ESKELL

It becomes a disease, it infects you. Grubeinsucht, Griesiger called it. I've faced it, now i'm sorry to say it's touched you, for that I apologize, as once you've seen what it does you can only try to forget. If you seek assurance of its reality or lack thereof it grows.

Ben collapses on a tree stump hidden in the tall grass.

ESKELL

I thought not going deep in this time would help. Distract yourself and it will fade. Otherwise it will consume you. Just have a rest and get Tabitha back to Fordy in the morning, she's sleeping in guest room eleven until hers is ready again.

BEN

Sir, I need it to make some sense.

ESKELL

The problem is, it doesn't. That incident when Fordy was young. The one we made the thorn bush story for to explain her scars but I never told you exactly what caused them. I told Fordy it was a dream for so long even I began to believe it myself.

EXT. BOROGOVE MANOR - DAY

A pretty rowan tree full of red berries has replaced the stump under a cloudless blue sky amidst the well trimmed lawn, far from the overgrown mess it's become and below that tree on a red gingham picnic blanket is a younger Eskell reading the paper while a young Fordy in a blue dress, sitting next to Tabitha in a yellow one, is trying vainly to get a white cat to drink milk from a saucer.

ESKELL

You're going to give it diarrhea.

YOUNG FORDY

No I won't, Dinah loves milk.

ESKELL

Well you're not the one cleaning up the watery cat shit are you my dear?

YOUNG FORDY

No, Margaret is.

ESKELL

Fair enough, proceed.

A scraggly brown hare hops out of the Tulgey Wood, sniffing the fresh spring air standing on its hind legs.

YOUNG FORDY

Daddy, look!

Eskell keeps reading as the cat launches from Fordy's arms and runs after the hare, then Fordy after them both.

ESKELL (V/O)

By the time I looked up, she vanished into the woods. It happened so quickly.

Fordy runs to the tree-line and trips over a low branch down a preposterously large rabbit hole, similar to the gaping hole the Constable saw below the root mass. Eskell runs frantically after her, trying to catch up to her.

INT. TULGEY WOOD - DAY

Eskell breaks the tree-line but there's no hole and worst of all no Fordy, simply the same dark forest of ancient trees sunlight can't touch, thanks to the thick canopy of vines impossibly slithering to and fro like serpents. Panic takes over and on cue the tree branches interlock behind him like a woven basket, offering no escape.

ESKELL

Fordy!

His yell is answered by a roar, roar being the sole sane label for the bestial ululation so angrily guttural and revoltingly inhuman it rattles the trees and causes the snakelike squirming of the vines to cease under threat of whatever baneful thing of nightmare that - that is.

ESKELL (V/O)

It sounded like no animal I'd ever heard and I've heard them all, you know that.

A faint childlike giggle breaks the grip of fear. It has to be Fordy, he races toward the sound of her laughter.

YOUNG FORDY (O.S.)

You shouldn't butter a watch.

A light emerges between the trees as he runs, like sleepy morning eyes slowly opening a blurry vision takes shape in the darkened woods to a **Wonderland** where Fordy is in an arm chair at the head of a table set for tea. His eyes bulge seeing what is to her right. A child sized march hare with straw in his brown fur between an equally large sleeping dormouse and a man wearing a top hat with a 10/6 price tag, ten shillings and six pence, resting his elbow on the dormouse while debating intensely with Fordy.

THE MAD HATTER

But you should watch your butter.

ESKELL

Fordy!

Fordy, the hare and hatter turn in surprise. Even the dormouse wakes up, sees Eskell and falls frightened from his chair. The march hare snatches the hatter's watch and runs off as the hatter throws a teacup at Eskell's face in anger, it strikes him and shatters. He instinctively draws his hunting knife and hacks blindly to defend himself but there's a scream. He looks and sees Fordy laying on the ground, back slashed, dress bloodied with knife wounds where her keloid scars remain today. Her sunny tea time has vanished along with her three friends.

She's been forced to join Eskell in his dreadful version of the Tulgey Wood, he drops his knife in grief when another abominable roar shakes the trees. He looks back and vomits in revulsion at the sight of something so blasphemous it immediately threatens his sanity.

He turns away and again sees his wounded defenseless child and grabs the knife to defend her as a pair of pestiferous red eyes germinate from a jagged burbling patch of darkness darker than dark that is what must be the thing's purulent misshapen body as if ink and shadow had come to life. It reaches for everything and nothing with each movement. It is a wickedly black shapeshifting mass creating questions that only lead him to the quick conclusion that it is death in all it's inevitability.

Showing no obvious form until choosing yours. It spasms, jerks and twitches toward them like an inescapable fated nightmare. It will kill them and he can do nothing to stop it. However, he makes a choice with the time he has, by tossing aside his knife and pulling the bleeding Fordy up into his arms, hugging her as tightly as he can.

ESKELL

I love you more than anything.

The thing vanishes and between the trees appears a new fleck of bleary light, he runs towards it carrying Fordy as the branches part into a clear path back to the lawn.

EXT. BOROGOVE MANOR - BACK - DAY

Love defeats fear as he carries Fordy into the sunlight rushing her toward the manor right past the tree that has become the stump that Ben is presently sitting on.

ESKELL (V.O.)

It gives what you give it.

EXT. TULGEY WOOD - NIGHT

Ben is still seated, listening and hugging Tabitha.

ESKELL

I told her it was a dream. But she said
the hatter would teach the cat to smile.
I told her that it was impossible.

YOUNG FORDY (V/O)

No it wasn't! The hatter said it's
perfectly natural to believe as many as
six impossible things before breakfast!

Her voice seems to echo faintly from the forest, Ben
turns but looks right back at Eskell trying to ignore it.

BEN

But what if-

ESKELL

I'll tell you what I told her! It was a
dream, you were mistaken, it was a dream!

INT. GUEST ROOM - DAY

Fordy is asleep in a bed less grand than hers, a simple
wooden frame and peace lilies in dusty pots along the
footboard. Though there is a small bay window and an out
of fashion carmine chase lounge by the balcony door.

THE MAD HATTER (V.O.)

Have you guessed the riddle yet?

YOUNG FORDY (V.O.)

I've given up, what's the answer?

THE MAD HATTER (V.O.)

I haven't the slightest idea.

ESKELL (V/O)

It was a dream! It was a dream!

Eskell's voice fades into echo and Fordy jounces awake,
her stomach bubbles audibly and she launches out of bed
in her nightgown and barges through a door marked "W.C",
into a bathroom that lives up to the water closet name.

Claustrophobic in size with only a sink and high cistern
toilet that she falls onto groaning then a *ding* against
the bowl signals the priceless heirloom watch is out of
her ass. It's then buried in an avalanche of cake and
chocolate run out of her like laxative by the croton oil.

Once the shit show ends, she wipes and flushes. It clogs predictably but she's too sick to care. Staggering from the bathroom - she sees Tabitha sitting at the edge of the bed, staring at her. She gasps then another sound causes her to jump and turn to see Ben drop a stack of clothes on the chaise lounge by the balcony door.

FORDY

Jesus! What are you doing?

BEN

Sorry. Margaret told me to bring your clothes, Eskell had the rag and bone man take your mattress away, a new one won't arrive for a few days at the earliest.

Her focus shifts back to Tabitha sitting on the bed, she picks her up and looks closely at her old doll's face.

FORDY

Bettany said she was gone.

BEN

Gone getting cleaned and a new dress.

FORDY

Did they do something to her face? She looks like she's smiling now.

BEN

No, it wasn't restoration, just cleaning.

FORDY

Thank you. Toilet's clogged.

BEN

You just had to ruin the moment.

FORDY

If I get sick again, i'm not sure i'll make it to another bathroom. Besides I need you gone a moment to get dressed.

Ben leaves and closes the door as she rummages through the clothes and pulls on a pair of brown riding pants under her nightgown then takes it off completely, leaving the keloidal scars on her back in view, lining perfectly with Eskell's story. It was no dream, it was his blade.

She adds a white collared shirt and takes in the view of the rear lawn and Tulgey Wood while buttoning it. But out the window, she sees something sitting on the tree stump.

Fordy squints curiously and leans closer to the glass as she finishes buttoning her shirt right as whatever it is stands up and glides towards the Tulgey Wood. Fordy pulls her leather suspenders up and runs right out the door.

Soon after, Ben returns with a plunger to find the door open, so he heads into the bathroom to work on the clog.

BEN (O/S)

Oh *Miss*.

He's disgusted by the sight in the toilet but he plunges on, the water noisily splashes until it flushes. He drops the plunger and reaches into the toilet pulling out the cause of the clog then walks out of the bathroom holding it up to the window light to get a good look, of course it's the white rabbit watch that's been stuck in Fordy's ass. *But* speaking of Fordy, there she is outside the window running across the lawn to the Tulgey Wood.

EXT. TULGEY WOOD - DAY

The sky is neither blue or gray but a pale near white as Fordy charges into the forest and out of the meadow-like grass. The branches abruptly part as if welcoming an old friend and she trips down a dark rabbit hole. *Again*.

INT. TULGEY WOOD - DAY

Fordy tumbles out of the dark hole and lands softly on a purple patch of flowers that seem to glow as if by magic. She curiously reaches for them as just as several blue butterflies swarm under her arms, urging her to her feet.

What she sees astonishes. The Tulgey Wood has become a beautiful **Wonderland**. Sunlight shines dreamily through the lush canopy even though the day outside were a drear

The trees are scrumptiously green and lusciously healthy. Her astonishment grows as she looks around but that feeling is what the Tulgey Wood responds to, the flowers grow larger and the sunlight brighter as she steps forward. It's a Tulgey Wood marvelously different than what Eskell, Ben or even that the Constable saw.

FORDY

Aren't I underground? This is impossible.

The Tulgey Wood darkens immediately in response, the trees rot into decay and drop their leaves, exposing a bleak black sky as the butterflies drop dead and the flowers fall with them.

She looks back ready to run but sees infinite rows of dead trees as if she were now lost miles inside and not mere feet into the tree line.

Now this *is* impossible. A thought that is more than enough to make things much worse as fear penetrates her psyche. The bony branches of the deadened trees interlock into tightly woven thorns behind her, just like it did for Eskell as her panic takes absolute hold of her.

And on cue a monstrous roar comes from deep in forest, that shakes her near sick, there was humanity in that sound that shouldn't be there. It was no man or beast but something sacrilegious. Branches snap. It's coming.

She hides behind an emaciated tree riddled with fungus as the *thing* trods by at a torturously slow pace snorting phlegmy snorts and dragging what sounds like elephantine hooves on too many legs as she crumbles into a trembling, sweaty mess. Fear and exertion stirring the side effects of the toxic purgative croton oil and the remnants of her chocolate binge. She clutches her stomach and tears roll down her pallid cheeks, trying not to be sick as she sits at the base of this dead tree while cowering helplessly.

CHESHIRE CAT (O/S)

It's of your own invention.

She stifles a scream seeing the Cheshire Cat standing there grinning with Eskell's bullet still in his face, but she yanks him down behind the tree, deciding he's the less worrying monster. He falls stiffly as a board and grins up at her as she scoots back against the tree.

FORDY

Shut up before it kills us.

CHESHIRE CAT

If that were all it could do, there would be nothing to be afraid of i'm afraid.

FORDY

How could you not be afraid of death? Of being killed, being eaten. Are you mad?

CHESHIRE CAT

We're all mad here, i'm mad, you're especially mad i'm afraid.

FORDY

Why would you call me mad?

CHESHIRE CAT

You must be, you're talking to *me*.

FORDY

What's mad about you?

CHESHIRE CAT

I smile when i'm angry.

She recoils, chilled by this confession because he's been smiling the entire time and again on the cue of her fear a high human roar cries out and ends in an equine chitter that is quickly answered by a bullish one deeper and louder than any normal bovine could make, those *things* whatever they are, are enormous, even brobdingnagian.

FORDY

Now there's two of them?

The Cheshire only grins as the beasts argue in a language of grunts that are jarringly broken by the sound of a tree trunk sharply snapping. Then the rumbling, bumbling and stumbling of the two titans into what sounds to be a fight. Fordy signs the cross and silence is a brief victor then replaced by a series of rhythmic smacks that are luridly wet as they echo along with the wailing of one beast and grunting from the other. The sounds are sickly titillating. Enough so that Fordy's face warps with disgust, she looks at the Cheshire for answers but he just lays at her feet, grinning that unceasing grin.

FORDY

What the fuck is over there?

CHESHIRE CAT

You brought it with you.

FORDY

Tell me what we're dealing with!

CHESHIRE CAT

Minotaur most likely.

FORDY

There's no such thing, they live in books, they're Greek fairy tales.

CHESHIRE CAT

Tell that to the centaur.

FORDY

Do you know what they do to women?

The Cheshire's eyes pendulate slowly towards the noises.

CHESHIRE CAT

What it's doing to the minotaur.

One of the beasts throatily squeals like a stuck hog as the sound of fluids slopping messily on the ground in salacious repetitions, Fordy again looks to the Cheshire.

FORDY

Did it stab it? Is it dying? Are we safe?

CHESHIRE CAT

No that's the minotaur's milk.

FORDY

That didn't sound like milk.

CHESHIRE CAT

Well. It's white and squirted out of him.

Fordy gags then one of the beasts lets out a guttural whine and the speed of the smacking sounds quickens.

CHESHIRE CAT

Better hurry before the centaur spills his and isn't distracted anymore.

She leaps up over the Cheshire and flees in the opposite direction. The further from the sounds, the calmer she feels and the dead Tulgey Wood comes back to tepid life with demulcent light, the trees sprout dull leaves. The flowers lift to a wilt from rotted stalks and the butterflies groggily reawaken as she runs on until her fear turns to shock and awe, stopping as she sees the place Eskell saw between the trees. One she once knew.

An old wooden table with a worn white cloth. Covered in old teacups, teapots and more. All seeming as if it had been left out in the weather for a great many years.

FORDY

I *must* have gone mad, did I die in my fucking sleep? This is from a dream. A dream I had when I was a child.

Fordy begins a hysterical laugh that turns quickly to tears, shaken by the sheer impossibility of this experience, assuming she is genuinely going mad.

CHESHIRE CAT (O/S)

Life is but a dream.

The Cheshire slowly materializes seated to left of the table's head, where the march hare had once sat.

FORDY

I don't need riddles! What even are you?
A man? A cat? A demon? Are you Dinah?

You can't be, Dinah was a white cat.
 You're no color i've ever seen a cat.
 Speaking of that who has ever heard of a
 cat that appears out of thin air! Are you
 a ghost?

CHESHIRE CAT

I'm a watcher.

FORDY

Then tell me what you've seen.

CHESHIRE CAT

I saw you when you were very small and I
 see you now that you've grown so tall.

FORDY

So I really was here before?

CHESHIRE CAT

Yes, with the march hare, the dormouse
 and the hatter, you ate bread and butter.

FORDY

Where are they?

CHESHIRE CAT

March hares only have so many marches in
 them before they've had too many. The
 dormouse fell asleep and never woke up
 again and the hatter took too much tea.
 That's bound to happen eventually when-

FORDY

-It's always tea time.

Remembering more of what she thought was a dream, she
 pulls out her old seat at the left head of the table and
 collapses into it, exhausted, sweaty and sick with the
 side effects of the oil. She looks over at the Cheshire.

FORDY

There's a bullet in your face.

CHESHIRE CAT

Your father put it in it's place.

FORDY

Why? - What am I saying, why wouldn't he?

CHESHIRE CAT

I told him the song that the white knight told you last time you were here, the song he tells everyone who will listen as well as I could remember and it didn't agree with him as most truths don't.

FORDY

What song?

CHESHIRE CAT

The one called *Haddocks Eyes* but named *The Aged Aged Man* but is called *Ways And Means* but is *A-sitting On A Gate*.

A quick flash of memory: the old white knight with the evening sun shining on his bald head and armor and his kind blue eyes as she smiled, like a picture framed in her mind. The forest responds by returning to further life, the tree leaves less desiccated, the wilted flowers tease a bloom and the butterflies slowly flutter again.

FORDY

Let me guess, he finally fell off his horse one times too many?

She remembers him climbing on his horse and straightaway falling off the other side and can't help but chuckle.

CHESHIRE CAT

One time too many, exactly.

FORDY

So they're all dead?

CHESHIRE CAT

I didn't say they were dead, the March Hare had enough marches, the Hatter had enough tea, the Knight had enough falls but the Dormouse is still asleep.

FORDY

I feel like this is a lesson.

CHESHIRE CAT

Yes, but you never were fond of those especially the ones in books, so i'm telling you, this is how you can relate, whatever you fear starts in here.

He points to his face with his paw and the bullet falls out into a tea cup with table with a *ding*.

CHESHIRE CAT

You'll do it again and again until you don't want to do it again, unless you want to begin again from where you began.

FORDY

What do you mean?

CHESHIRE CAT

I mean the March Hare tired of march. The Hatter tired of tea. The Knight tired of fall. And the Dormouse is still sleeping, he'll wake before it's a bore. But you sleep when you're awake. But instead of choosing to ruminate you could have cake.

FORDY

You mean, I choose what I focus on? I choose what affects me and when?

CHESHIRE CAT

Happy, sad, angry or mad, worry, fear, obsession or rumination. All are a state of mind in kind and when you think the time is right the knot will unwind since you are *the watcher* behind the thoughts of your mind. Pick the thoughts you like best, leave the rest as if they jest.

Fordy leans back in the chair, thunderstruck by the idea he's suggested to her, that she could possibly control thoughts, not be lead by them. She closes her eyes and takes a calming breath, trying to find peace within.

Vibrant leaves refill the trees lushly, colorful flowers bloom and butterflies float healthily over the table and the sun shines ever so much brighter. She reopens her eyes and sees that the table too is restored with a clean white cloth, steaming teacups and plates of yummy bread and butter. Fordy giggles with a pure childlike joy.

FORDY

Thank you.

She gets up from the table and steps away. But when she looks back, it's already gone. But only the Cheshire's grin remains, slowly vanishing, leaving behind the normal Tulgey Wood, now unremarkable as any forest. But when she turns around again she's baffled to see that she's mere feet from the exit. Had she never gone anywhere? Or has she already fallen back into her old state of mind?

EXT. TULGEY WOOD - AFTERNOON

Fordy quietly leaves the forest, returning to the drab day under a gray sky as she walks back toward the manor while a soft breeze wafts over the willowy grass, but her steps are dragging, her sweating more profuse, the after effects of the croton oil winning as she grows dizzy.

INT. ESKELL'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Eskell is watching from his third floor window as she approaches the terrace stairs, his face in stoic torment.

ESKELL

She remembers.

EXT. BACK TERRACE - DUSK

A while later, Fordy is laying on her stomach looking quite dead with her face against the stone. Behind her in the distance the sun has almost set over the quiet Tulgey Wood. But the rattle of the terrace door and hurried feet ruin the silence as Ben kneels down and takes her pulse.

BEN

Don't tell me that you've started
drinking like Eskell. Are you alright?

She startles awake and pulls herself into a seated position with her back to the stone terrace railing, no longer sweating but looking positively frazzled.

FORDY

I'm fine. I just need to get some water.

But she's clearly jittery as the memories of the Tulgey Wood return as if coming to terms with their reality. Ben takes notice and stands back up, making a kind attempt to distract her from it, he reaches into his pocket.

BEN

I have a gift for you.

He pulls out and offers her a silver heart shaped locket.

FORDY

Is that what I think it is?

It's the ashes of the Constable's cock, now a keepsake.

BEN

Yes.

FORDY

Throw it away.

BEN

Gladly.

He throws it into the grass then notices her weary state.

BEN

You saw him too?

FORDY

I don't know what I saw.

BEN

But you saw something?

She nods, shaking Ben with her admission and he gently bobs in appreciation of her honesty and heads back in.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Ben enters, leaving Fordy out on the terrace, he finds Margaret with clothes pins clutched between her lips while boxes and black curtains litter the dining table.

BEN

What's all that?

BETTS (O/S)

Funeral is tomorrow remember?

He's startled by Betts' voice and turns around to see her on a bronze library ladder near the window trying to hold up a black valance to get it hung above the window.

BEN

Oh right.

Ben continues to the foyer while Margaret pulls out a black drape, backing up as it flows from the box like a shroud only to look right and observe Fordy still sitting on the terrace. She drops it and dashes out the door.

BETTS

Hey, I can't hold this forever!

EXT. BACK TERRACE - EVENING

MARGARET

There you are. Bettany and I were in London all day picking up food for the funeral to save me from cooking and we went by Jay's mourning warehouse for our clothes and decorations so I didn't have time to check on you - did get *it* out?

FORDY

I did and I flushed that piece of shit down the toilet, if mother wants it she can search the damned pipes for it.

MARGARET

You did what?! I needed it to pay-

FORDY

Pay what Margaret?

MARGARET

I have a small debt, that's all.

FORDY

Where's Dinah Margaret?

MARGARET

Dinah? Oh, your imaginary pet? You haven't spoken of her in years.

The betrayal is written on Fordy's face. The cat was real, that much she knows. Margaret is lying. Margaret reaches down to comfort her, Fordy pulls away and as if on cue a thud comes from inside, Margaret runs back in.

INT. DINING ROOM - DUSK

MARGARET

What was that?!

BETTS

It came from the foyer.

Margaret heads through the archway to the foyer, again leaving Bettany up on the ladder with the valance.

BETTS (O.S.)

Wait come help me!

INT. FOYER - DUSK

She finds Ben holding his chest, sitting on the stairs.

MARGARET

Ben, are you alright?

Margaret kneels down and places her hand on his shoulder.

BEN

My heart was racing, everything feels far away, everything looked far away.

MARGARET

Could be stress.

BEN

It was like my soul was trying to take off my body, how could that be stress?

MARGARET

I've heard of these things, my sister-it's stress, go do something you enjoy.

BEN

In *this* house?

They laugh together.

MARGARET

There's a smile.

Ben bursts into tears, Margaret puts her arm around him.

MARGARET

Take this, I picked it up in London today, I was going to give it to Fordy to help her sleep but you need it more.

She reaches into her dress and retrieves a little black bottle. Desperate for some relief Ben drinks it quickly.

BEN

That was quite good, what was it?

MARGARET

Sugar, cinnamon, some lavender extract and a little bit of Godfrey's cordial.

BEN

Godfrey's cordial!? Isn't that just a bloody bottle of opium Margaret?!

MARGARET

It'll wash away the day, you'll drift off
and sleep like a mouse, your fears will
seem like nothing more than bad dreams,
now hurry to bed before it kicks in.

BEN

But really-

She shushes him and strokes his head. Ben surrenders with
a sigh, giving into the comfort of the moment.

BEN

Thank you, Margaret, truly. But I need to
tell you something before I forget, when
I was cleaning up the guest bathroom-

He rises to his unsteady feet and lists as the drug hits,
Margaret shushes him again and he slowly heads upstairs.

MARGARET

Off to bed.

BETTS (O.S.)

Margaret!

MARGARET

Oh shit! Coming Bettany!

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Several empty glasses of water are on the floor next to
the bed as Fordy lays in the lightless room, pondering
what she saw when a tap against the balcony door breaks
her contemplation. She turns her head to see what is
worse than something. Nothing. A nothingness that cruelly
allows her imagination to conjure demons from the black
veil against the window glass that is the night. When a
glass rattling tap, tap, tap scares her furthermore.

She rises as if compelled and creeps to the door, turns
the brass handle that creaks so distressingly that she
shoves it open to try to avoid leaning out the door,
watching the night swallow the door like a black sea.

FORDY

My mind is a terrible place.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

She guardedly steps outside, only for another tap to come from behind. She rushes forward in her fright, stumbling into the rail, nearly falling over it to her death.

The Tulgey Wood gasps with whiplashing leaves.

Fordy turns and sees the unlit lantern above the balcony door, assuming it the cause for the peculiar darkness she finds some calm, until her eyes adjust and she's scared by what is perched on the lantern, menacingly camouflaged by the dark is a *stately* Raven as Edgar Allan Poe put it.

But unlike his it did not beguile her into smiling nor give off the *mien of Lord or Lady* but one of pitiless Judge. With a scornful black-eyed gaze cast upon her nervous form as if her humanity were her greatest weakness in the face of the timeless Raven.

Edgar now in the forefront of her mind, heightening the fear within. Was this black bird an ancient messenger from the plutonian shore he'd mentioned so succinctly in his poem? A warning from the underworld? Or her guide towards it? These questions were enough to make her heart race as she found no answers, just a dreadful feeling in her chest that reminds her of Poe's refrain.

Nevermore. She makes a weak attempt to shoo the raven, but it flies over her head causing her to duck as it finds a new perch on the edge of the balcony. To her joy, this clears her path to go back inside but a metal glint on the bird's left leg in a ray of moonlight from behind the clouds, draws her eye. Kindness daring to beat fear.

FORDY

Are you hurt?

Fordy tepidly approaches the creature and removes a clip, finding there is something attached to it, a piece of paper, she unrolls it and holds it up to the moonlight.

It's a note, "Save yourself, nothing more, Lenore." The Tulgey Wood shakes in solidarity with her sudden wash of dread and fear, she hurries back inside with the note.

INT. ESKELL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Eskell is seated behind his desk, pouring a full glass of navy strength rum when the double doors fly open.

FORDY

Daddy!

Scared by her yell, Eskell nearly spills it.

ESKELL

Daddy!? What is it? Another rat in the tub? I told you, use a hammer!

FORDY

No! A raven showed up on the balcony with a note, signed by someone named Lenore.

She hands it to him and he immediately balls it up.

ESKELL

It's nothing. Story of an aviary fire in the paper. Carrier birds escaped. They must be looking for landing spots! That one smartly chose us. Go get your rest for tomorrow, here take some of this.

He hands Fordy the rum bottle and she takes a long sip.

ESKELL

Good girl but tell no one, they'll think you've gone mad and before you go to bed tell Bettany to bring me a slice of white cake, not Margaret, since we both know where her hands have been recently.

Fordy rolls her eyes and leaves, but as soon as the doors fall shut he hastily grabs and unfurls the crumpled note. He sees the signed name and slams his fist on the desk.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Fordy peeks into a sparse bedroom with a little twin bed littered with cute stuffed animals on a patchwork quilt.

BETTS (O.S.)

Margaret kicked you out?

Fordy screams, jumps and turns around to see Betts behind her in a white nightgown laughing at Fordy's fright.

FORDY

My father wants you to bring him a slice of cake. He doesn't want to see Margaret.

She goes on her way upstairs and Betts down to the foyer straight through the dining room where full moonlight has the mourning drapes casting long shadows from the tall windows across the dining table like wraiths, with the Tulgey Wood leering ominously at her in the distance.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Margaret is at the sink carefully pouring more Godfrey's cordial into the black bottle she let Ben drink from when the door swings open, startling Margaret causing her to drop the sedative bottle where it shatters in the sink.

MARGARET

Fucking hell! Bettany!

BETTS

Sorry! Sir wants cake.

Betts grabs a plate on the scullery table and cuts a large piece of white cake while Margaret opens the cabinet under the sink to get a bottle of 'Duncan's pure chloroform' that she hides in her apron as Betts exits and scurries back through the dark dining room, upstairs and down the darkened hallway toward the doors with Eskell's initials. The "B" cracked open, allowing the light of the now lit fireplace to guide her.

INT. ESKELL'S OFFICE

Betts slips between the cracked door with the plate.

BETTS

Your cake sir and I apologize for my state I was already heading to bed.

ESKELL

Lock the doors and put it on the desk, I need to tell you something important.

Her face scrunches with concern but she obediently locks the doors and returns to the desk with nervous curiosity, setting the cake down carefully on the left side.

ESKELL

I believe Lavinia hired Lenore.

BETTS

Who's Lenore?

ESKELL

Damnation in a dress. But her name isn't Lenore, it's branding, "Send for Lenore and have troubles nevermore," She's killed countless men of means. She's something of a privateer on land, i'd call her a gun for hire but she's far more and if Lavinia hired her, we're in trouble. She's clever beyond reason.

BETTS

Can't you do something?

ESKELL

What I do, what I've done. Is child's play to her. Of course I've killed men. But no one I thought I could ever hang for. Lenore silences royals and magnates.

BETTS

Sir, you're scaring me.

ESKELL

You should be. I inherited wealth, i'm a last name and reputation that I paved through my hunts and little else.

BETTS

You're more than that sir, i'm sure you'll think of something before-

ESKELL

The only thing I can do is be ready to die honorably, then my reputation stands. I know Lavinia wouldn't hurt Fordy but if i'm to die. I need to know my daughter is looked after and to stack the odds in my favor because Eskell Borogove will not go without a fight. I need you on my side. You're the only one besides Fordy who isn't privy to what is behind all this.

BETTS

What is it?

ESKELL

That I can't tell you, unless you tell me the truth about your father.

BETTS

My- My father?

ESKELL

If you refuse, i'll allow you to leave with a check for £150,000 never to return. I will hold no grudge, you've done your duties well. But this can go no further otherwise, if you are honest with me. But if you are, you will be rewarded.

BETTS

In what way?

ESKELL

A trust. You will receive a percentage of my estate and permanent residence here, Fordy will have no power to fire you without relinquishing her claim to her fortune, you will do the same if you abandon your post or duties to her.

BETTS

Sir, could I have a moment?

ESKELL

No. You may not. Last chance Bettany Rinthel. What happened to your father?

BETTS

I killed him.

ESKELL

How?

BETTS

With a jar of orange marmalade.

ESKELL

Was it full?

BETTS

Yes, I've had nightmares that his head was cracked open like an egg and his brains had been replaced with marmalade, that's why I never bring you your brunch.

ESKELL

I don't like marmalade, it's a children's food and it's fine your mother insinuated as much when she begged me to hire you to get you out of the city and away from the investigation. I just needed to know you trusted me enough to tell me. Besides I can't judge you. I killed my father too.

BETTS

What?

ESKELL

He caught me fucking his wife and wasn't happy about it but when was that man ever happy? He cut my dog's throat because he felt my love for her was making me soft and man's domain over beast must be practiced regularly and proudly.

The animal heads on the wall, a testament to that.

ESKELL

Then he beat me with a cudgel when I took to taxidermy to preserve her memory. The only place I found comfort was with my mother and from what your mother told me, we're a lot alike. You'll do fine.

Eskell reaches into his desk and tosses a stack of papers onto the desktop by the cake, and then a black ink pen.

ESKELL

Sign. Fordy signed hers years ago, had no idea what she was signing. Witness line is already signed. You'll be to her what Ben is to me. You'll look after her and pleasure her to keep her out of trouble.

BETTS

Sir, me and Fordy don't have those feelings towards one another at all.

ESKELL

And me and Ben do? Some things are out of necessity. Duty. If she argues offer her your thumb, i've seen Margaret do it more times than I care to remember. She craves women and you can't allow that craving to turn into a scandal in London with her carousing around like a damn bachelor, it has to stay in this house, always.

Eskell stands up and places his hands on the desk.

ESKELL

Promise me. You will do whatever she asks of you, even if it's on your knees.

BETTS

I feel like i'm being blackmailed into prostitution, if I say no now you'll kill me for what you just told me, Sir.

ESKELL

I wouldn't do that, don't be silly, it's not like anyone would believe you if you told them Bettany. You're just a maid.

BETTS

I suppose you're right sir.

Betts says this with enough sadness, it's obvious her feelings were a little hurt with that belittling.

ESKELL

You can still leave but i'm appealing to your sense of honor, duty or love of money, that you'll look after my only daughter since there's no one else I can ask. I'm being vulnerable Bettany. I may die tomorrow. I can't overstate Lenore's abilities. There's no band of cutthroats I can summon, she sent a letter by raven. She's probably staked the manor out, it's likely already surrounded. Making your decision - perhaps decided already. So?

BETTS

I promise.

Betts signs and as soon as she puts the pen down she flinches seeing Eskell's outstretched arm offering her a pistol. A webley no 5 express pistol, specifically.

ESKELL

Take this and come around here to me.

BETTS

Sir?

ESKELL

Stop saying Sir. Take it. And come here.

She takes the gun and rounds the desk. Eskell sits back down, takes her hand and raises the gun to his forehead.

BETTS

Sir?

ESKELL

Bettany if you say Sir, one more time I will put you over my knee like Fordy, now steady your arm and squeeze the trigger.

He lowers his hands, leaving it level with his forehead. Betts is trembling, holding a gun to her bosses head.

ESKELL

Now!

She squeezes it and the gun clicks empty.

BETTS

Jesus Christ!

Betts exhales in relief, but Eskell didn't even blink.

ESKELL

I needed to be sure you had it in you, to follow an order. I'm counting on you.

BETTS

What about Margaret and Ben?

ESKELL

Lavinia knows they know, you're the only outlier. They all know the secret that Fordy can never find out about.

BETTS

What secret?

ESKELL

Margaret is Lavinia's sister.

BETTS

SIR!?

ESKELL

I warned you.

BETTS

Sir wait!

ESKELL

I was going to give you a pass, then you did it again, my word must have meaning especially now considering everything!

BETTS

You can't expect me to cease addressing you properly so suddenly! I mean really Sir! Fordy is fucking her own aunt?

ESKELL

I knew I wasn't hearing things, but she's not her aunt either. Lavinia isn't Fordy's mother, now bend over.

Betts begrudgingly bends herself over the desk while remaining more curious than she is bothered.

BETTS

Then who is?

Eskell smacks her ass with his right hand as she grabs the edge of the desk but each spank is harder than the last and the smacks louder as her face turns from curious to carnal as she bites her lower lip as he goes on, smack after smack until she softly whimpers at the final one.

ESKELL

Now take the gun and cake, Fordy likes a woman with something to grab onto.

Betts stands up, flushed and a out of breath as she clumsily picks up the plate and starts to leave.

ESKELL

Wait.

Betts turns back to Eskell eagerly but he only picks a bullet up off the floor and offers it to her.

ESKELL

You'll need this.

She takes it then pops the cylinder and sees every chamber loaded but one, it must have fallen out and he intended for her to kill him. Betts looks back but he's already turned his chair to stare out the window and ruminate on the Tulgey Wood. Betts unlocks the door and walks into Margaret carrying clothes on hangars, she hides the gun behind her and slips past side-stepping.

MARGARET

He didn't want his cake? - Wait, I have your clothes for tomorrow.

But Betts runs away, right down the hall as Margaret huffs in irritation and enters the open office door.

MARGARET

Your funeral clothes sir.

He doesn't say a word or even turn his chair around. There's an uncomfortable threatening silence, only the crackling of the fireplace and concern of what he might do. So she quietly hangs his clothes on the coat rack.

MARGARET

Will you be going to bed sir? I have something that might help you sleep.

Margaret waits in more of that ill-flavored silence.

MARGARET

Sir?

ESKELL

Go to bed, Margaret. If I have to turn around, you may regret to consequence.

Margaret bolts out the open door and lets it swing shut.

INT. BETTS ROOM - NIGHT

Betts places the gun and cake on her little white night stand then climbs into bed and lays back, her right hand darts down beneath the sheets, she touches herself and moans. That spanking was very much to her liking. But just as she begins to get into it a scratching sound coming from the ceiling immediately ruins the mood.

BETTS

For fuck sakes!

She grabs the gun and fires a single shot into the ceiling. Blood sprinkles down onto her face as she laughs in satisfaction holding the gun off to the side while her other hand returns beneath the blanket, masturbating on the thrill of victory, her new status, becoming Fordy's contracted concubine in her mind and most of all the memory of the spanking Eskell gave her with the blood of whatever she killed in the ceiling all over her face.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Margaret plods on through the hall, still carrying the rest of the funeral clothes on hangers. She knocks on a door to the left but opens it without even waiting.

INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

It's a neat yet elegant room with a lavish chiffonier, fine rosewood armoire and matching desk under the open window facing the front of the house that she lays the clothes on and then of course Ben, passed out on his four post teak wood bed with spire finials and sheets still tucked thanks to the opium laced drink Margaret gave him.

MARGARET

Ben. Benjamin. Ben!

Margaret calls him, louder and louder to see how asleep he really is while pulling that bottle of chloroform from her apron but when she receives no response she leaves.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Margaret steps out of Ben's room and gently shuts the door, only to head further down the hall and knock on another, but this time she waits for an answer and when she receives none, she tries to open it but it's locked.

BETTS (O/S)

I'm busy!

MARGARET

I have your mourning clothes.

BETTS (O/S)

Leave it! Lea- Leave them on the kn-knob!

MARGARET

But when you open the door, they'll fall
and get wrinkled, come get them.

BETTS (O/S)

Margaret please!

She picks up on the charged timber of Betts' voice.

MARGARET

Do you need a hand?

BETTS

Fuck off Margaret!

Margaret laughs and hangs the clothes on the door knob
and carries the last of clothes upstairs.

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Margaret enters with the clothes but suddenly drops them
as if she'd seen a ghost. Only it's worse, it's a memory.

YOUNG FORDY (V/O)

Will you read to me?

A young Fordy is sitting on the bed with an open book as
an even younger Lavinia walks past where Margaret is
standing and sits next to Fordy and takes the book. The
Erlkönig by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe on the page.

LAVINIA

The scary one again?

YOUNG FORDY

It's not scary, it's dramatic. But make
it for me like you do, I like that.

Lavinia gently clears her throat.

LAVINIA

*Who rides so late through the dark night
and drear? A mother with her daughter so
dear, holding her safe, keeping her warm.*

She puts an arm around Fordy who smiles as they snuggle.

LAVINIA

*My girl, why do you hide your face in
fear? Don't you see mother? The Erlking?
The Alder King with crown and cape? My
girl it's a streak of fog.*

EXT. TULGEY WOOD - NIGHT

The fog thickens in front of the Tulgey Wood and in the darkness between the trees the Cheshire's grin appears.

LAVINIA (V.O.)

*You dear child, come and go with me, for
many a game I will play there with thee.*

INT. BETTS ROOM - NIGHT

Betts is in bed licking the plate clean, obeying Eskell's orders, preparing and perhaps practicing for Fordy.

LAVINIA (V/O)

*Mother, mother, don't you hear? What the
Erlking quietly promises me?*

INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ben is still laying on his bed, twitching in his sleep.

LAVINIA (V/O)

*Be calm, dearest child, thy fancy
deceives, it's only the sad wind that
blows through the withering leaves.*

INT. ESKELL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Eskell is still sitting and silently staring out the bay window at the Tulgey Wood with his elephant rifle laying across his lap, daring a bullet from Lenore to strike him through the glass or maybe simply resigned to his fate.

LAVINIA (V.O.)

*Will you come with me? My daughters will
tend to and wait on you finely. They'll
dance, rock and sing you to sleep.*

He turns to look back at the contract Bettany signed.

LAVINIA (V.O.)
*Mother don't you see the Erlking has
 daughters brought here for me?*

Then places the rifle barrel under his chin.

LAVINIA (V/O)
*My darling I see it alright but it's only
 the old gray willows deceiving thy sight.*

The leaves of the foul forest outside shake as if cheering for his death but he pops the breech, letting the massive 3 inch bullets fall to the floor. And the forest calms in seeming disappointment. Eskell gets up, locks the doors again then moves to the northwestern wall and reaches into the mouth of a mounted Barbary lion's head. Another extinct creature in his collection.

LAVINIA (V/O)
*I love you and i'm charmed by your beauty
 my dear but if you are unwilling then
 it's force that I will employ.*

A switch clicks and the wall slides open mechanically, revealing a dark closet of a doorway that he steps into.

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Margaret remains in the doorway but is now only watching present day Fordy asleep in the bed, tossing, turning, muttering, lost in what seems to be an awful nightmare.

YOUNG FORDY (V/O)
*Mother! He seizes me fast! Surely the
 Erlking has hurt me at last!*

She shuts and locks the door behind her and picks their funeral clothes back up off the floor, placing them on the chaise lounge. Her attention returning to Fordy with a look of solemn resignation as reaches into her apron.

LAVINIA (V.O.)
 The mother gallops in terror. She holds
 in her arms the poor shuddering child.

Margaret takes out the bottle of chloroform again, opens it, approaches the bed and holds it right under Fordy's nose until she stops thrashing or moving at all.

LAVINIA (V/O)
*She reaches the courtyard with toil and
 dread while the child in her arms is
 motionless and dead.*

Had this been her plan for Bettany and Eskell too? Only to be foiled by locked doors and refusals? She deeply inhales the chloroform herself and passes out with her arm draped over Fordy like some twisted Romeo and Juliet as the bottle spills on the sheets next to the book, open on the illustration of the Erlkönig by Julius von Klever.

INT. BETTS ROOM - MORNING

A distant knocking wakes Bettany. She slowly gets up and looks out the window to the front of the house.

BETTS

Shit!

She rushes to open the door, the clothes Margaret left fall as predicted as she trips out into the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

BETTS

Shit! Shit!

Betts picks them up and ducks back into her room, quickly reemerging dressed in a lace cuffed black mourning dress, she runs down the hall and bangs on Ben's closed door.

BETTS

They're here! Get ready!

She runs on to Eskell's office and bangs on both doors.

ESKELL (O/S)

What?!

BETTS

The mourners are here!

ESKELL

This early?! It's 7am!

BETTS

Well it's two black carriages outside!

ESKELL

Do not let them in! Make them wait!

INT. FOYER - MORNING

Betts runs to the front door and waits for Eskell who comes down moments later in a black jacket, tall boots and a pair of leather gloves, dressed to kill.

ESKELL

Do you have your gun?

BETTS

Yes sir.

ESKELL

Good girl, now go get Fordy. We need to keep her under eye, then come back here.

Betts runs back upstairs as Eskell opens the door and there's **JACK HEART (50s)** hardly more than 4 feet tall, behind him are two rotund men and behind them are the two black carriages. Front for the coffin and the back for family with a tall driver smoking holding a hookah hose.

MAN

Oh, hello Sir. I'm Jack Heart. The undertaker. An honor to meet you. I was expecting Lady Margaret to welcome us.

ESKELL

Why would my chef answer the door?

JACK

Forgive me, I was unaware of her role. With me are my assistants Mr. Dee and Dum.

MISTER DUM

It's pronounced Dumé.

ESKELL

What about him?

Eskell points to the carriage driver puffing pink smoke from the hookah, contrasting the cold gray morning.

JACK

That's Pillar, he won't be coming in yet but to return to what i'm here for, which is to see Lady Luthgate to her rest-

ESKELL

No! I mean what in the steamed hell is he smoking! What is in that pipe of yours!?

PILLAR

Something of my own creation.

JACK

TO RETURN to my business, I need to see the gravesite to make sure it's befitting-

ESKELL

Watch your tone. It's black gap in the ground for a rotting old crone, throw it in, how fitting need it fucking be?

LAVINIA (O.S.)

More than wherever you stuck your mother!

Lavinia angrily climbs out of the carriage and charges up the front steps and right past Jack, Dee and Dum.

LAVINIA

Shall we visit her grave? If you'd like to keep insulting my mother on this day of all days you disrespectful ape?

Eskell remains unusually silent and tight jawed, she smirks and arrogantly pats his cheek with her hand.

LAVINIA

Don't worry, you know how good I am at keeping secrets. Otherwise, would things have gotten this far my sweet boy?

ESKELL

They've already gone much too far, you sent a mad man after your own daughter. The crazed bastard ejaculated on Tabitha.

LAVINIA

No. No? Noooo...

ESKELL

We nearly had to burn her, which would solve this issue now that I think of it.

LAVINIA

Enough! Let us through and fulfill your damn agreement to my father at once.

ESKELL

Why should I? Now that you've hired Lenore. Why don't I just stand here and wait for the sniper's bullet to blow out my brains so you can all move on.

LAVINIA

Who is Lenore?

ESKELL

Don't play dumb, last night a raven arrived with a letter for Fordy, it said save herself, nothing more, her slogan.

LAVINIA

I don't know who or what you are talking about and you're beginning to worry me.

ESKELL

Well it should if it wasn't you. She's an exceptionally dangerous woman and I don't mean it in a coward's sense. Even if I could snap her pretty little neck that neck is surely coated in poison. She's lays intricate plans and has the firearm skills of a duelist, if you sent her after the lot of the Peaky Blinders, you'd be a fool not to consider the outcome possibly going in her favor.

LAVINIA

Are we in danger? Do we need to leave?

Lavinia clings to Eskill, he stiffens, knowing she'd never act this way with him unless truly afraid. He shoves her back, retreats inside and slams the door.

ESKELL

Margaret hired Lenore. Where is she, where is Fordy? Where the fuck is Ben?!

BETTS

They're upstairs, I knocked on Ben's door but he didn't answer, neither did Fordy, I didn't go looking for Margaret yet since you told me to come back here.

Eskill takes off running up the stairs two at a time.

BETTS

Sir what do I do?!

ESKELL

Don't let them in!

He charges through the halls in crazed anxiety, up to the guest suite and crashes forcefully through the door.

INT. GUEST ROOM - MORNING

FORDY (O.S.)

What the fuck?! I could have been naked!

Though she isn't, she stands up from the chaise lounge in all black, waistcoat, shirt, pants and riding boots that she was lacing. Eskell bear-hugs then releases her.

ESKELL

We're under siege! Where's Margaret?

FORDY

In her room I imagine.

ESKELL

Stop lying to me! I know what you two do despite your persistence that I don't! You're the only person in this place I cannot live without, you're in danger and i'm trying to stop it, where is she?!

FORDY

She went through the servants corridor. But what danger could Margaret be to me?

ESKELL

I thought it was your mother's doing but she was too frightened for it to be her, she threw herself on me. She's genuinely never done that before. That raven, the letter was from a great mercenary named Lenore and I don't know from what angle she will attack so my plan is to-

Ben enters, in his all black funeral suit with a neat satin black ascot around his neck, rubbing his eyes.

BEN

I'm sorry sir, Margaret gave me some Godfrey's cordial, it knocked me out.

ESKELL

She drugged you?!

BEN

No, I was nervous after what we saw. She said she used it to help Fordy sleep.

ESKELL

Do you normally take that to sleep?

FORDY

No.

ESKELL

See? She must have planned to sedate you so you slept through Lenore killing me.

BEN

Lenore?! Sir I have the damned watch. She can have it back, I pulled it out of Fordy's toilet when I was unclogging it.

ESKELL

Why was it in the toilet?

FORDY

I put it there.

ESKELL

The truth damn it! There's no more time for all this pussy footing damn it!

FORDY

Margaret made me hide it in my bum, so the Constable wouldn't get it then it clogged the toilet when I shat it out.

ESKELL

Why did she need to hide it?

FORDY

I gave it to her but my mother told the Constable we stole it, does it matter?

BEN

Then lets just give it back and end this!

ESKELL

To who? Whoever is on Lenore's side is the side we need to be on, if we give it up before we know we may as be fucking ourselves. That or we need to go down there and murder everyone but Bettany.

FORDY

We're not killing Margaret.

ESKELL

So your mother is on the table?

FORDY

No!

ESKELL

If it's us or them, what is your choice my dear? Because I choose you over them.

BEN

What if it's a ruse? No Lenore at all?

ESKELL

Who the hell else is going to send a trained Raven to find Fordy? And who else would have known the right room but Margaret? She had to have told Lenore.

BEN

How would she even afford to pay her?

FORDY

The watch.

BEN

Damn it Margaret. Such an old friend.

ESKELL

Well, that's that. Ben get a handgun from my office. I'd tell you which model but I don't have weak pistols, anything will do just make sure it's loaded. Fordy, let's go. Bettany is on our side, she's waiting downstairs. Stay close, no doddling.

Ben heads to the office then Eskell and Fordy walk out of the guest room and sneak downstairs, as they get to the foyer Bettany is gone. Eskell freezes and stops Fordy.

ESKELL

Wait. I hear voices.

He draws his gun and slinks around the corner to peek through the archway into the dining room. A black coffin covered in white laurels is on the left end of the dining table, Eskell takes Fordy's hand and leads her closer before sticking his head into the room. But all of a sudden hands the gun back to her without warning.

ESKELL

Hide it.

Fordy struggles to hide the gun in the back of her waist coat as Eskell steps boldly into the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM

The living are at the right side of the table, with Lavinia two seats from the right head with Pillar on her left nibbling a parsnip. On the opposite side of the are Mr.Dee and Mr.Dum fighting over chocolate profiteroles. Margaret approaches them with tray of shrewsbury biscuits to go with the tarts and bath buns that Mr.Dum snatches.

MISTER DEE

Trade me a biscuit for a bun?

MISTER DUM

Not a chance.

Pillar reaches not for one of the many elizabethan tea cups on the table, but for a hampton cup full of a dark thick liquid that he dips the parsnip in repeatedly.

ESKELL

Is that melted chocolate?

MARGARET

I had a lot of left over after-

ESKELL

After what?

He cuts her off, since he knows about Fordy and the watch but Margaret doesn't know that he knows. He glares until Margaret's gaze breaks when Fordy walks in towards her grandmother's coffin, lost in a sad trance as she pulls out a chair and seats herself in front of it to pay her respects. Margaret slips by Eskell and rubs Fordy's unreceptive shoulders. Betts walks in after, carefully carrying a rummer's glass that she sets before Lavinia.

ESKELL

You're drinking again?

LAVINIA

I never stopped, but it's white tiger's milk. Nothing heavy. Need to steady my nerves thanks to this mysterious Lenore.

Lavinia laughs and takes a sip of her drink. Eskell looks over at Margaret as Fordy pushes her away, the complete lack of reaction to the Lenore name drop gives him not comfort or concern, but pure confusion in the moment.

PILLAR

Nothing mysterious about Lenore.

Eskell's neck twists back towards Pillar.

PILLAR

Before I got this job she killed my boss while he was in the brougham. Odd thing was, I never stopped the carriage, both of his eyes had been removed, his throat slit and she left a letter written on his stationary, advertising her services.

ESKELL

Sounds like you're hard of hearing.

PILLAR

What was that sir?

Pillar jokingly digs in his left ear, earning a laugh from Dum and Dee while Eskell's attention moves to Betts.

ESKELL

I told you not to let them inside yet.

Mister Dee and Dum look up then continue eating and Lavinia of course has no reason to be surprised by this.

BETTS

I tried to stop them but Margaret insisted they be allowed in.

MARGARET

This was Mrs.Luthgate's wish, to be surrounded by loved ones for a last meal besides she *was like a mother to me*, this was my last chance to actually do something for her. So I did.

Eskell walks over to Margaret and sternly whispers.

ESKELL

I hope that's all you've done.

MARGARET

What do you mean sir?

ESKELL

I hope you have no idea, for your sake.

She hangs her head, struggling to find a voice under Eskell's glare...then she does. She raises her head.

MARGARET

Perhaps for your sake, sir. You should see to the Undertaker and not me.

ESKELL

Are you threatening me Margaret?

MARGARET

Quite the opposite. Sir.

Margaret turns to look through the dining room window at Jack on the terrace, peering into the Tulgey Wood with a monocular. Eskell dashes around the table and outside.

EXT. BACK TERRACE - MORNING

ESKELL

What are you doing?

JACK

Scouting the site but the forest isn't making it easy, it's like trying to look through a wall, shall we proceed sir?

ESKELL

No. I'm choosing the grave.

JACK

That's not how this works sir. I must see if it's fitting for the client I am paid-

ESKELL

This is my home, those are my woods that graveyard is in, of which belongs to my family. You can take that old bag over to St.Clement's, I'm sure Mr.Chamberlain and his men will handle it properly.

JACK

Understood Sir, but might I be allowed to accompany you at least for appearances? My reputation with my men depends on it.

ESKELL

Sure, you go on.

Jack continues down the terrace stairs with his cane, while Eskell pops his head back in the dining room.

ESKELL

Fordy, come with me, quickly. Everyone else, enjoy until your boss and I return. Ben and Bettany, let no one upstairs.

Eskell trots down the terrace steps to catch up to Jack.

JACK

Thank you for this kindness sir.

ESKELL

Not a problem. I've been in your shoes before, unfortunately with her mother.

They share a laugh and walk on, Fordy catches up to them midway across the lawn as they approach the Tulgey Wood.

EXT. TULGEY WOOD - MORNING

The Tulgey Wood is as Fordy left it, unusually normal, not spooky, not fearsome, but absolutely boring.

Eskell holds aside the branches for Jack who kindly tips his hat, Fordy follows but as soon as she steps by him into the Tulgey Wood Jack unsheathes his cane revealing a blade and in one swift swing slices her throat. Eskell yells in horror as she falls, grabbing her neck as Jack keeps his blade pointed at her bleeding on the ground.

JACK

I only nicked her! But I can bloody well knack! Another step and i'll finish the job! Point me to the constable's body!

She lowers her hands, the perfectly placed neck cut isn't deep but heavily bleeding. Jack is frighteningly skilled.

ESKELL

Wait just a second-

A gunshot echoes from the manor, Eskell looks back.

JACK

Don't you see sir? The game has ended, the checkmate is in place, point it out and go inside or me and your child die, right here. Since I know you'll get me but you won't before I get her. I have no motivation to kill her. Since we both know, she's the only thing keeping me alive. Let's be gentlemen. But if not my pay will be sent to my family if I fall.

Eskell reluctantly points to the familiar dirt pile covered in twigs among the grown over gravestones, near it is the bent shovel that Ben hit the Cheshire Cat with.

JACK

Hurry along now, my boss is waiting.

Eskell takes off, running as hard as he can to the manor.

JACK

Now my lady, kindly grab that shovel and start digging but don't try anything, we have no quarrel but I know where to poke you to start a leak that won't stop, for your sake please don't underestimate me.

Fordy slowly gets up and grabs the shovel.

INT. DINING ROOM - MORNING

Eskell storms in but there's no one at the table, just the coffin. He rushes around the table and sees a trail of blood on the floor that he follows to the foyer and to a body laying by the stairs, Eskell sees that it's Mr. Dee with a bullet in his forehead and a pistol beside him. He checks the chamber, there's one spent round. Eskell looks up stairs and sees that the blood trail continues up.

The faint stomp of hooves draw his eye to the front double doors, one is cracked. He strides over and peeks outside, both horse carriages remain. He closes the doors and uses his key to lock them then takes a deep breath, turns and marches upstairs with the gun at his side down the hallway to his closed "E.B" emblazoned office doors. He opens the left "E" door, to not immediately expose himself to anyone at that side, using it like a shield.

INT. ESKELL'S OFFICE - MORNING

As soon as he steps through Pillar has Eskell's elephant rifle aimed right at his head, Eskell stops as Pillar snatches the pistol away and tucks it into his belt but he keeps the rifle pointed at him. Eskell then sees Ben on the floor with Betts holding pressure on his bleeding shoulder while Mr. Dum is holding a revolver on them both.

WILTON (O.S.)

Welcome home, Mr. Borogove.

His head snaps left. Wilton is sitting smugly behind Eskell's desk with his feet up, holding yet another gun he recognizes but it's not the one he gave Bettany.

ESKELL

Just order your man to pull the trigger.

WILTON

I'm not here to kill you sir, I only want to talk like gentlemen, which is far more than you offered me. The only reason your butler was shot was because he drew a gun-

MR. DUM

He murdered my brother!

BETTS

Ben saved me! All I heard were Wilton's feet running up the stairs, You said not to let anyone up and when I ran to stop him that other man pulled a gun on me!

BEN

Was I supposed to let an intruder kill
Bettany?! This is our home damn it!

MR.DUM

Well, look at what good it's done you.
Wilton's got your gun and i'm gonna blow
your bloody head open before we go.

Lavinia walks in breaking the tension by drawing all the
attention to her as she approaches the desk and hands
Wilton a very old and very dusty leather bound journal.

LAVINIA

There it is, we can go.

Wilton opens it in a frenzy and flips through the pages
as Margaret stops in the doorway, shaken seeing Eskell.

ESKELL

Since they don't have a gun on you, I
imagine this was your doing Margaret?

MARGARET

She was going to have me arrested over
the watch and I didn't know where it was.

BEN

I found the watch! Take it and leave!

Ben reaches in his coat and throws it to the floor.
Margaret picks it up but Lavinia holds out her hand.

LAVINIA

Give it to me.

MARGARET

I need it.

LAVINIA

You still have no right to it my pretty
little liar. You are no Luthgate.

MARGARET

I'll be dead if I can't pay-

ESKELL

So you did hire Lenore?

WILTON

Who the hell is Lenore?

ESKELL

It doesn't matter now! As soon as we entered the woods that bastard out there drew a blade and cut Fordy's throat.

Margaret wails in grief and collapses to the floor.

LAVINIA

That wasn't part of the plan!

MARGARET

I don't care what happens to me anymore. Take the watch! I need to see to Fordy!

ESKELL

Oh calm down! She's alive no thanks to you and if you run out there he actually will kill her, you traitorous cunt!

WILTON

This is your fault! We'd never have met if not for your cruelty! My carriage wasn't to arrive for hours. She took mercy by letting me wait in hers. When she returned she told me things that a man writing your biography would love to hear! As thanks I offered to pay for the funeral and share half of the proceeds of the book I can now accurately complete! Because i'm going to expose your twisted tapestry of blood and false identities!

Lavinia nervously looks at Margaret as Wilton points accusingly at Ben then to the window in quick succession.

WILTON

Sodomy and incest.

ESKELL

Lies! I'll sue you into the poor house with her! No one will ever believe-

Wilton loudly smacks the open journal on the desk.

WILTON

These are your mother's memoirs!

ESKELL

What?!

He reaches for them, Pillar clears his throat, reminding Eskell that his own elephant rifle is pointed at him.

WILTON

That she had officially stamped by Henry Thurnhill, commissioner of the oaths, who was confirmed by Lord Westbury. High Chancellor, lucky for me. Thurnhill is still working. He'll verify this stamp!

LAVINIA

I tried. Eskell. I tried to make you and Fordy, even Margaret see reason. All I wanted was enough money to live on.

ESKELL

So destroy your daughter to destroy me?

LAVINIA

No I'm saving myself! Me! I matter! I need a place to live! A place to breathe! Eat! Shit! Just like you! Enough of the lies! She's not my daughter! Even with a gun to your head you won't let it go! Did what your mother made you do, create a denial so great you think it's the truth! Me and Margaret worked for your parents!

Wilton hurriedly writes down what she's saying.

LAVINIA

We cleaned the bloody floor after you killed your father because he caught you fucking your mother! Even before that we caught you two countless times. You were the only one who cared! She would catch me looking and keep going, whether it was you on top or her on her nasty knees!

ESKELL

Stop talking Lavinia! Stop it!

LAVINIA

No! I won't! Fuck you! Fuck your mother! Fuck this place! Hell I helped deliver Fordy! You plucked me and Margaret out of the Seven Dials on one of you and Ben's little trips! We drew straws to see who would be your fake wife and who'd be the cook! It was never more than that!

Ben hangs his head as Betts looks on in silence.

LAVINIA

That's why you hate me so much! You know I know you! Not the hunter!

Not the man you pretend to be but the real Eskell, a scared little boy trying to please his mother in the most disgusting way!

Eskell looks to the window, he's breaking, even Mr.Dum is shaken by the story but Pillar keeps the gun on him.

LAVINIA

Your mother was a sick, awful woman and your father was cruel, they destroyed you, they turned you into a monster and Fordy is the abomination born of it, a sweet, beautiful one, but an abomination.

ESKELL

Don't talk about her.

LAVINIA

You don't need to defend her, your mother only wanted control! Why else would she write that journal? Nonetheless have it legitimized! The only reason Fordy never found out was because I cared enough to hide it once the fever took her after the birth! She told me to give it to Fordy! She wanted her to know her truth, she didn't care for her mental wellbeing any more than she cared for yours!

ESKELL

My mother, didn't do anything to me Lavinia. I seduced her because I knew it the best way to hurt my father. I took his conquest in a way she could never get over. It was my greatest glory I'd say but I meant Fordy. She's no abomination. She's the product of my victory. Born of it, better than I rose blooming from the mud. And whether any of you all admit it, barring these gentlemen. She drives each one of your passions, one way or another.

LAVINIA

If that's true, you're worse than I thought. It means it's all you, your sick mind and ego and Fordy is still you getting back at your father, like some incestuous trophy or Frankenstein.

ESKELL

Stop! Stop insulting her or i'm going to buck this gun and you will need to pray that this man has good aim or I will strangle you to your death Lavinia.

LAVINIA

I should never have left Fordy here, she deserved anything but being with you.

MARGARET

Lavi, you said you hid it to protect Fordy. You have the watch, you can sell it. Why not keep hiding it now?

WILTON

Because she has no choice! My men have the guns! We made an agreement! I fulfilled my end of the deal! Help her get the journal and I can use what's in it as long as I share the proceeds!

Wilton smacks the desk again, as if trying to scare Eskell the way Eskell had scared him, to no effect.

WILTON

This man made me shit myself! I will not die the thousand deaths of a coward! He's going to prison for the murder of the Constable! The maid is going to prison for murdering Mr.Dumé's brother! And you sir will rot in a cell while your bilious rancid life becomes a best selling novel while we reap the rewards! You'll live knowing that I was the better man!

ESKELL

I'll live with nothing!

LAVINIA

Yes you will! You'll live with this just like I live with my sister fucking the girl you chose for me to love, like I live haunted by the memory of Bishop's love for me after you killed him for it. You remember Bishop right? I know all three of you do. The Gardener. Your friend, Benjamin. The only man who was able to handle the grounds, the mess outside and those weird woods. You hated him for that along with how he handled me. Not that you were ever interested.

ESKELL

I didn't kill him!

LAVINIA

You're just saying that to save yourself, but it's over now Eskell. It's over.

ESKELL

You're right! I wasn't interested! But we could have had a fine arrangement. You and Tim, me and Ben, eventually Margaret and Fordy but my issue with Timothy arose because he wouldn't stop bragging about it around the gentlemen's clubs.

MARGARET

Wait. You knew? Fordy didn't tell you?

ESKELL

Oh she told me, but I knew already. It just worked out to let Lavinia believe it was her fault. Got you away from her.

Lavinia is incensed by this, Wilton is again writing as fast as he can while Pillar squeezes the rifle tighter.

ESKELL

But as I was saying, when I confronted Bishop, he started espousing like a poet about love and having the freedom to let his love be known the same way you don't hide the perfect blossom. Was a bit much for a gardener. And well I didn't kill him. But I did break his jaw, then I raped him and Ben cut his throat. Now he actually died knowing who the better man was. So go on, put that in your book.

Lavinia yanks the pistol from Pillar's waistband.

ESKELL

I told you I wouldn't live with it.

He smiles at Wilton as Lavinia aims it at Eskell.

WILTON

No! I need him alive!

Lavinia pulls the trigger right as Wilton shoots her in the chest, causing her to miss Eskell and nearly shoot Dumé, startling him and giving Betts who is still kneeling beside Ben the chance to draw the gun Eskell gave her and shoot Dumé under his jaw, he drops dead.

Pillar swings the elephant rifle at Betts and pulls the trigger but it doesn't fire, since Eskell emptied it last night. Betts takes advantage and shoots Pillar until her gun runs empty while Margaret crawls cradles her sister.

Wilton picks up the journal to make his escape while still clutching a gun, Eskell vaults his desk and charges Wilton who fires a single shot just as Eskell tackles him through the bay window and they both fall outside.

LAVINIA

Tell Fordy, i'm sorry.

She dies as Margaret sobs in disbelief, hugging her body. Betts and Ben get up but Ben scrambles to the window.

EXT. BOROGOVE MANOR - MORNING

Ben sticks his head out of the broken window and sees both men laying in the grass, covered in blood, having fallen four floors to ground level, neither are moving.

BEN

Eskell!

ESKELL

Rifle! Ammunition!

Ben ducks inside as Wilton gets to his feet and sprints with the journal toward the Tulgey Wood but he's lost his gun. Ben throws the rifle out the window to Eskell who stands up and somehow catches it with one hand.

ESKELL

Bettany signed her agreement! You know what that means! Clean out the Lion's mouth! And if I don't return Fordy is Lord and Lady. Stay on or live life as you see fit. Farewell, old friend!

He follows after Wilton with a limp through the grass, tears run down Ben's face, the finality too much for him as he reverts to an old nickname in his emotion.

BEN

Eskie!

ESKELL

And I you Benjamin! And I you!

Professing their love without saying it, Eskell continues his determined limping walk toward the Tulgey Wood.

INT. TULGEY WOOD - MORNING

Fordy has nearly finished digging up the grave while Jack stands watch with his sword cane. The Tulgey wood darkens as Wilton runs over, it's feeding on his fear. Fordy stops digging, noticing the change but Jack is too distracted by Wilton and Wilton with his own problems.

WILTON

You have to protect me! Borogove is chasing me! All the men are dead!

JACK

He only had a man and woman! How the hell-

WILTON

He armed them! We weren't thinking to search a maid and a butler! Perhaps if you had planned better and not hidden out here with his daughter eating tarts!

JACK

No, no, no! You changed the plan because you wanted to confront him! I told you we could have done this at the table when their defenses were down! Draw on them!

WILTON

We don't have time for this! If he kills me, you don't get paid! He has a rifle!

JACK

I don't have a gun!

A bullet strikes Jack in the mouth, it rips through his cheek and out the other side, he rolls around gurgling.

WILTON

Don't kill me! Please! It was all him!

Wilton drops the journal and raises his hands as Fordy steps up out of the grave pointing Eskell's gun at him.

FORDY

He told me not to underestimate him so I didn't. I was only protecting myself.

WILTON

Then protect me too! If you save me I can tell you things your father lied about!

FORDY

What are you talking about?

ESKELL (O.S.)

Get back my dear.

Wilton turns and sees Eskell approaching with his rifle, he screams, drops to his knees and hugs Fordy's legs.

ESKELL

Stop trying to cunnilingate my child!

FORDY

You're bleeding!

ESKELL

Speaking of bleeding, did the man you're protecting tell you he shot your mother?

Fordy gasps and aims her gun down at Wilton.

ESKELL

Remember to make him suck it!

WILTON

Your father knew about the affair! Before you told him! He just wanted to keep you and your mother apart! If you don't kill me or let him kill me i'll tell you everything else! Please! I'm sorry!

FORDY

Is he telling the truth?

ESKELL

Of course not! Now move! He's trying to save himself! And to think i'd begun to respect his gamesmanship, to concoct a plan so intricate! But he's still a sniveling coward! The least he could do for himself is die like a man! No one will remember that you shit yourself! But they will remember that Wilton Ealdwine stood chest out and died like a man!

Wilton looks up at Fordy and whispers.

WILTON

It's all in the journal, i'm truly sorry.

He stands up nearly catatonic and turns to face Eskell.

WILTON

Please allow me to speak my last words, to meet my end with dignity.

Eskell nods and Fordy lowers her gun. But by the open grave, Jack still alive, mouth bleeding, reaches for his sword cane in an attempt to save Wilton. But when his hand gets near it the Cheshire Cat's clawed paw stretches out of the grave drags him in, no one even notices.

WILTON

A poem, by Edgar Allan Poe: From childhood's hour. I have not been as others were. I have not seen as others saw. I could not bring my passions from a common spring, from the same source I have not taken. My sorrow, I could not awaken, my heart to joy at the same tone and all I loved. I loved alone. Then in my childhood... In the dawn of a most stormy life was drawn from every depth of good and ill. The mystery that binds me still. From the torrent or the fountain. From the red cliff of the mountain. From the sun that round me rolled in its autumn tint of gold from the lightning in the sky as it passed me flying by.

The canopy recedes, bathing him in sunlight, the sentient Tulgey Wood feeling the poem with Wilton for a moment.

WILTON

From the thunder and the storm and the clouds that took the form when the rest of heaven was blue of a demon in my view.

Wilton glares, right at Eskell as he sternly finishes.

ESKELL

Beautifully said.

WILTON

Your grandmother is-

Wilton's head explodes, splattering Fordy in brains and blood as she falls, Wilton's crushed head lands between her thighs as she screams and frantically kicks to get away as Eskell lowers the smoking rifle. Fordy scrambles up to her feet and reaches for the bloody journal.

ESKELL

NO!

Eskell points the massive elephant rifle at Fordy.

FORDY

Daddy!

ESKELL

I can't let you read it.

FORDY

So you threaten to kill me?!

ESKELL

If you read it, the person you are dies,
it's a mercy your soul dies pure, clean.

FORDY

Stop pointing that thing at me!

ESKELL

Then stop reaching for it!

FORDY

Then tell me the truth, what was he going
to say, what the hell is in that journal?

ESKELL

I can't do that either.

FORDY

If you lied about the affair, if you'd
destroy my relationship with my mother
who the fuck knows what else you'd do?

ESKELL

Your mother still fucked him! You'd still
have had to choose who to live with! The
result would have been the same!

FORDY

So you did lie! You just said you didn't!
I'm not walking back into that house to
be curious all my days! Was she really
even shot? You may have made that up!

ESKELL

Curiosity isn't a curse! But the truth
can be! So can the denial you're grasping
at but everything in there made me what I
am! You're good! You're kind! You're
clean, the truth takes away your choice!

FORDY

No! You took my choices away! Everything
is always what you think is right! Where
I went, who I saw! How many suitors did
you steer me from? Until Margaret became
my only option for something of my own!
How many trips did you abruptly decide
you wouldn't fund as the date arrived?!

ESKELL

So I should pay so you can run off and fuck a swede in who knows where!

FORDY

It's not even your money! Grandfather left all of it! You've worked for none of it! Yet you act like i'm supposed to start from zero when you haven't!

ESKELL

Because I earned it! I shot the bastard!

FORDY

Well there it is. All those bullshit insinuations that I kill you, was just another attempt to reshape me in your image. You chipped away at everything I wanted out of this life in a long attempt to give me no other choice! Now look where we are. What good has it done?

ESKELL

Perhaps none my dear but you're blind to what you are. You're lazy. You have had every chance to work, save up and run off but have you done it? No. Because you'd rather this than be like all the rest. You would rather rot at my side than be common. So kick the journal to me and we'll go back inside and rot together.

FORDY

No. I will not go back in there and try to drink away all these questions.

ESKELL

I only tried to protect you from the horrors of this world. Maybe I failed or maybe, I just have to see it through.

FORDY

What do you mean?

ESKELL

I love you enough to kill you my dear.

He cocks the rifle but she points her gun at her temple.

FORDY

I won't be another beast felled by your hand, I won't give you the satisfaction.

ESKELL

If you go, I go with you. That was going to be the case regardless my dear.

Eskell repositions his gun under his chin.

FORDY

Oh fuck that then! If there's an afterlife i'm not being controlled by you, i'm done being your daughter! I'll reincarnate where you'll never find me, you'll live so many lives chasing me you won't recognize my immortal fucking soul!

Fordy turns her gun on Eskell and fires every bullet she has as he stands with his chest and chin out bravely welcoming her to land a shot but she misses them all on purpose then throws the gun at him and grabs the journal.

ESKELL

NO!

He aims at Fordy and fires as she runs into the brush, she yells in pain as if struck. He tries to reload but the Cheshire Cat springs from below, headbutting the gun and causing Eskell to nearly drop the new bullets.

CHESHIRE CAT

'Twas brillig. And the slithy toves did gyre and gimble in the wabe...

The Cheshire at long last continues his recite of the Jabberwocky that he started in the beginning but Eskell ignores him and looks around to track Fordy, hunting her.

But his fear of her reading the journal is overtaking him and feeding the Tulgey Wood that again darkens ominously and changes grotesquely as he begins to sweat and wheeze.

CHESHIRE CAT

All mimsy were the borogoves.

Fordy stops behind a tree and feels her neck. The elephant rifle bullet grazed her, she's bleeding more.

CHESHIRE CAT

And the mome raths outgrabe.

An unearthly roar shakes the forest and Fordy crumples to the ground, hugging the journal tightly to her chest.

CHESHIRE CAT

Beware the Jabberwock, my son!

Eskell limps slowly after Fordy, clumsily reloading.

CHESHIRE CAT

The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!

The trees bend and snap obstreperously as that loathly thing, that evil eldritch creature roars from its guts.

CHESHIRE CAT

*Beware the jubjub bird and shun the
frumious bandersnatch!*

Eskell raises the rifle, ready to defend himself from the what he convinced himself was a dream along with Fordy.

CHESHIRE CAT

*He took his vorpal sword in hand, long
time the manxome foe he sought!*

Fordy tightly shuts her eyes beneath a tree that hasn't darkened with the forest but is the only beautiful one left as if she's found a small ray of hope it senses.

CHESHIRE CAT

*So rested she, by the tumtum tree and
stood a while in thought!*

A black mass careens through the trees like smoke from a coal train, shifting shape polymorphically. Eskell pisses himself in fear as its burning red eyes nictate and it wails like a banshee threatening to pierce his mind with the madness of its' reality, the sight and sound of it together or alone assault every rung of sanity.

CHESHIRE CAT

*And as in uffish thought he stood, the
Jabberwock with eyes of flame. Came
whiffling through the TULGEY WOOD and
burbled as it came! One two!*

Eskell pulls the trigger, both barrels fire!

CHESHIRE CAT

*One two! And through and through! The
vorpal blade went snicker snack!*

The bullets do nothing. Eskell screams as it swallows him in darkness. The forest falls silent. She opens her eyes and guardedly looks around, the Tulgey Wood is once more beautiful and peaceful. Again her Wonderland without Eskell's dreadfulness. And there in between the trees, she sees the Hatter, the Dormouse and March Hare at the table through the trees waving her over but instead she gets up and runs for the exit with the journal in hand.

EXT. BOROGOVE MANOR - AFTERNOON

CHESHIRE CAT

*She left it dead and with it's head, she
went galumphing back.*

She ambles bloodied with the journal back out under the overcast sky through the tall grass dancing under a soft wind, without her father and up the back terrace.

INT. DINING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Fordy opens the terrace door and rounds the table, when a relieved Margaret comes from the foyer to hug her.

CHESHIRE CAT

*And hast though slain the jabberwock?
Come to my arms my beamish boy!
Oh frabjous day, callooh callay, he
chortled in his joy.*

MARGARET

Are you hurt?

FORDY

No worse than after the *thornbush*.

Fordy side steps her but Ben steps right into her path, holding his wounded shoulder, worried clearly for Eskell.

FORDY

I don't think he's coming back.

Ben purses his lips, biting back emotion.

FORDY

He was bleeding and then he tried to kill me over this. Said it would destroy me.

She raises the journal, all eyes turn to it.

MARGARET

It will. Did you read it?

FORDY

No, but is my mother dead?

MARGARET

Yes.

FORDY

Margaret?

MARGARET

Yes?

FORDY

If her money hadn't run out, do you think she would have ever come back for me?

MARGARET

No.

Fordy hands Ben the journal, deciding against reading it but trusting him over Margaret now. She then grabs a bottle of navy strength rum off the sideboard by the wall and walks exhausted into the foyer and slowly upstairs.

BEN

Don't go in the office.

Margaret's attention shifts to the coffin on the table, she heads right to it and knocks off the flowers.

BEN

Margaret, that's the least of our problems, first of all i've been shot.

She lifts the coffin lid and hysterically laughs into tears. Ben walks over and puts his good arm around her. Figuring she's cracking under losing her mother and Lavinia today but his eyes widen looking in the coffin.

BEN

Who the hell is that?!

MARGARET

It's Lenore! Dumb whore must have suffocated! Now I don't have to worry about paying her! We're free and clear!

BEN

Far from it. Need I remind you of the bodies we need to get rid of? The one right behind us in the foyer and the others upstairs including your sister.

MARGARET

Oh fuck her, this was all her fault. We were defending ourselves, we can just report this to the police and be done.

BEN

Think Margaret. Eskell and Wilton went through the window and bled their way into the woods. The police will tear this home apart and track them out there.

MARGARET

Then what do you suggest?

BEN

We put them in the lion's mouth. Eskell told me to clean it out. It was his last order, I intend to complete it plus I left Bettany up there guarding the office with a gun. But we need to hurry. Fordy can't see what's inside, you know why.

MARGARET

Actually. I don't. Eskell never let me look, only you and Lavinia knew.

BEN

Well, prepare yourself. Get some rope and sheets. I'll get the body in the foyer.

MARGARET

But your arm, let me get a bandage.

BEN

The bullet went in and out, I think I can get him on my back, can't leave him here.

Ben approaches Mr.Dee's body, grabs his wrist with his good arm and hefts him up onto his shoulder with a groan.

INT. ESKELL'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Betts is seated on Eskell's desk with a gun in hand when a thud shakes the double doors, she raise the gun.

BETTS

Who goes there?!

BEN

It's me! Open the doors!

She hurries to open them. Ben stumbles in and drops Mr.Dee on the floor near Lavinia's body and wearily walks to the Barbary Lion's head while Marageret enters with rope and sheets that she covers the bodies with.

BEN

Bettany go flee the horses so no one comes looking, they need to be anywhere but out front of the manor.

BETTS

How do I flee horses?

BEN

Shoot a gun to scare them.

She leaves as Ben sticks his hand into the lion's mouth, triggering the secret door to open again. He walks inside as Margaret wraps Mr. Dee in a sheet and some rope then strains to drag him into the little door. She peeks in.

MARGARET

Ben? I can't see anything.

He lights a wall sconce, illuminating a room with padded red velvet walls with gold fleur-de-lis. Margaret walks down the small set of stairs and freezes, seeing a sheet draped over what looks like the form of a curvy woman, back arched on all fours in the middle of the room.

MARGARET

What is that?!

BEN

It's Madam Borogove.

Margaret jumps back and falls into an armchair in the corner then leaps right back up screaming, she turns around and sees the petrified face of a man, mouth agape.

BEN

And that's Eskell's father, he taxidermied them both. His mother, he wanted to remember at her best. While his father, he saw him as another trophy.

Margaret wretches as Ben lights another sconce revealing a painting of Madam Borogove on the far wall but her attention turns to a different portrait on the right.

MARGARET

Is that Fordy? It's hideous, she looks dead or close to it. Look at her face.

BEN

Eskell had it painted after the incident in the woods. To remember her in case she didn't survive. He would come in here and pray it would take her pain, change for her, die for her, instead of being a memory of what she was. Silly, but he could be such a dreamer at times. It was beautiful, air must have warped it.

MARGARET

But Ben, I was the one at her bedside
when Eskell wasn't, she did stop
breathing for a few moments.

BEN

Now don't you start being silly.

BETTS (O.S.)

Ben! Margaret! Someone's outside!

Ben and Margaret rush back into the office.

BEN

Is it the police?! Get the other bodies!

BETTS

No. I went to get rid of the horses and
he was feeding one of them so I assumed
he must be the owner and had come to-

BEN

Get on with it Bettany.

BETTS

Oh of course I'm sorry, I shot three
people today and i'm a bit out of sorts.
He said he wanted to see you and Eskell.

BEN

Did you get his name?

BETTS

Mr.Gray, Dorian Gray.

Ben's runs to Eskell's desk and opens the drawer.

MARGARET

Ben? What's wrong?

BEN

Move the bodies and lock Fordy in
whatever room she's in! Listen this time!

He frantically runs out of the door with the gun in hand.

CHESHIRE CAT (V/O)

*Twas brillig and the slithy toves did
gyre and gimple in the wabe.*

EXT. TULGEY WOOD - EVENING

The Cheshire Cat grins, standing in the dimming woods as he finishes the last line of Lewis Carroll's Jabberwocky.

CHESHIRE CAT

*All mimsy were the borogoves
and the mome raths outgrabe.*

FADE TO BLACK.

But as quickly as the darkness takes its final hold the Cheshire continues the poem that never truly ends because as you leave this place, it's your story that begins.

CHESHIRE CAT (V.O.)

*Twas brillig and the slithy toves did
gyre and gimble in the wabe. All mimsy
were the borogoves and the mome raths
outgrabe. Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the jubjub bird and shun the
frumious Bandersnatch! He took his vorpal
sword in hand. Long time the manxome foe he
sought. So rested he by the Tumtum tree and
stood awhile in though as in uffish thought he
stood. The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame, Came
whiffling through the tulgey wood and burbled as it came!
One, two! One, two! And through and through. The vorpal
blade went snicker-snack! He left it dead, and with its
head He went galumphing back. And hast thou slain the
Jabberwock? Come to my arms, my beamish boy! Oh frabjous
day! Callooh! Callay! He chortled in his joy. Twas
brillig, and the slithy toves did gyre and gimble in the
wabe. All mimsy were the borogoves, and the momraths outgrabe.*