

VERMIN

A Play in Five Acts

by

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Cast of Characters

<u>THE BARTENDER:</u>	A female bartender
<u>RAJ:</u>	A rich capitalist, JANIS' boyfriend
<u>JANIS:</u>	A rich capitalist, RAJ's girlfriend
<u>TERRA:</u>	JULIA's best friend
<u>JULIA:</u>	A former drug addict
<u>MAC:</u>	A socialist journalist
<u>LUCILE:</u>	A student
<u>CORNELIUS:</u>	A very old vampire
<u>SANDRA:</u>	A vampire
<u>JASPER:</u>	A crusader

Scene

A universe in which vampires exist, but have been nearly hunted to extinction.

Time

The present

ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING: A bar at which sit three women and one man, JANIS, JULIA, TERRA, and RAJ. They sit with drinks in their hands and watch a TV. Behind them sitting alone is MAC reading. Quiet blues play in the background.

JANIS:

I hear they're trying to making vampires legal in Scotland.

TERRA:

Oh God.

RAJ:

Time to drop a few nukes. To be honest I can't taste the difference between scotch and whiskey anyway.

JANIS:

RAJ!

RAJ:

I'm not joking. How can you insure the safety of your people if there are vampires walking around?

JULIA:

You just hate them because they're at the top of the food chain.

JANIS:

If they're at the top of the food chain, why have we almost brought about their extinction?

JULIA:

Because of our numbers. They can't reproduce sexually.

JANIS:

But they suck our blood.

JULIA:

Who cares? We can make more.

TERRA:

Let's not talk politics. This bar has too bright of lights.

JULIA:

(Laughs)
What?

TERRA:
You can't think properly when the lighting is too bright, it's science. That's why mall people are stupid.

RAJ:
We need to get going anyways. You should really come with us,

JULIA:
Smith always puts on a good fight.

JANIS:
She said she'd think about it, don't pressure her.

JULIA:
It's okay. I only became an adult because someone pressured me once.

TERRA:
It's true, I was there.
(They both laugh.)

JANIS:
What?

RAJ:
Babe, I don't think we want to know.

TERRA:
It's nothing anyway.

JANIS:
I'm sure it was nothing too bad.

TERRA:
(Dismisses the notion with her fingers)
Don't be judgmental.

JANIS:
I wasn't being judgmental.
(Both TERRA and JULIA laugh.)

TERRA:
You are judgmental.

JANIS:

What?

TERRA:

It's not always a bad thing.

JULIA:

You two always try and be our parents.

RAJ:

Don't loop me into this.

TERRA:

I'm looping you in hard. You told us to get out of your basement just because we got your wife high.

RAJ:

That was a long time ago. We were broke students and you girls ate our food for the week.

(All three girls laugh.)

We really got to go, the fight is almost starting.

JANIS:

Okay, okay.

(Hugs JULIA)

I'll see you later.

JULIA:

I'll try to make it.

RAJ:

(Gives her a high five)

We all know that could mean that we'll either find you at the after party or in Paris on the morning news.

TERRA:

(Hugs JULIA)

And if you do decide to come, don't bring that guy you've been hanging out with.

JULIA:

Which guy?

TERRA:

Come on.

JULIA:

(Fake sighs)

I know which guy.

Thank you. Bye.

TERRA:

Okay bye.

RAJ:

Bye.

JANIS:

(Exit JANIS, TERRA, and RAJ.)

(MAC waits a few moments then walks over.)

Can I buy you a drink?

MAC:

Why? Can't think of anything to say?

JULIA:

I believe people talk too much when they first meet.

MAC:

But here you are, talking.

JULIA:

Changing social convention would take up a lot of time.

MAC:

Not as much as living with it.

JULIA:

I blame the rapid pace of modern life.

MAC:

I don't. I think the world has always been full of people who don't have time for subtlety.

JULIA:

(Leans toward her)
I'm MAC, by the way.

MAC:

Like the song about the shark?

JULIA:

(Smiles)

MAC:

I like to think I'm that smooth, yes.

JULIA: JULIA.

MAC: Like the song about the lady in the bar?

JULIA: I haven't heard that one.

MAC: Neither have I. I was hoping you had.
(MAC waves off-screen and soon a bartender shows up.)

MAC: Could I get an old-fashioned, please?
Bartender: Sure.

MAC: (To JULIA)
Do you want anything? Other than to change social convention, of course.

JULIA: No.
(The bartender pours his drink. MAC pays him, he goes to get change but MAC shakes his head and they both nod in thanks to each other.)

JULIA: I saw you reading Nietzsche over there, how do you like him?

MAC: He's not hard to like. It's just ironic that someone who's against Christianity as much as he is would write like an angry preacher, but I digress.

JULIA: Preaching? To me he wrote like he was crying, like Poe or Hawthorne.

MAC: True. The real thrill of it all is knowing other people are watching you read Nietzsche.

JULIA: (Laughs)
Well at least you're honest.

MAC:

I wouldn't jump to that conclusion yet. I am vain though.

JULIA:

So am I, but it's a small price to pay for nice hair.

MAC:

Vanity is underrated. A little vanity can spice up anyone's life and make them confident. It's awful how many genuinely humble people there are walking around making the rest of us feel guilty about being confident in our own skins.

JULIA:

So you're one of those brooding people who thinks humans suck, yet you think I'm apparently more interesting than Friedrich Nietzsche?

MAC:

I think you're beautiful.

JULIA:

Wrong. You make think I'm beautiful, but really I simply don't care. People mistake it for beauty all the time.

MAC:

Maybe I like your hair.

JULIA:

It's only the chemicals and oil. It's an illusion induced by flattery. I normally don't pay attention to anyone who compliment my hair.

MAC:

What about the people who drink old-fashioned?

JULIA:

They don't need attention, they want to be noticed reading Nietzsche.

MAC:

So I probably should've ordered over there, then came and sat down?

JULIA:

Or just read in a place where you aren't distracted by aloof women.

MAC:

But who would make my old-fashioned?

JULIA:

I bet you know how. You probably tried to impress more than one women with that one.

MAC:

I don't need to impress people when I have a good scandal that makes me interesting. A good scandal is better than a makeover.

JULIA:

That's true. Scandals are the only things I remember about people.

MAC:

Everyone needs a little scandal. That's the one thing I'm good at helping people with.

JULIA:

So what's a good scandal for me?

MAC:

It's easy. All you have to do is pick something that's not too self-destructive at first. You need to build-up to being a degenerate; that way it's a tragic story and not just a tragedy.

JULIA:

I work a full-time job and I'll be going back to school in a few weeks. I don't have time for anything that takes too much commitment.

MAC:

Then be a mystery and let people build up rumors in their own minds.

JULIA:

People do that all the time. It's not the same as a scandal.

MAC:

Have you tried vigorously sleeping around?

JULIA:

I want people to be intrigued, not jealous.

MAC:

You're right. Plus the ones who aren't jealous or possessive are just plain scared of you and we want that but in a different kind of way. How about drugs?

JULIA:

What kind of drugs?

MAC:

Isn't ambiguity what we're shooting for?

JULIA:

Yes, but if I go around saying, "I used to do drugs," people might think I used to do all of them.

MAC:

Then say, "Drug." It sounds specific and carries a bit more weight.

JULIA:

Yes that's good. Should I bite my lower lip and look away like this?
(She bites her lip and looks away.)

MAC:

It might be a bit purple. You need to be nonchalant or it's too sad and not mysterious enough.

JULIA:

Can I laugh bitterly?

MAC:

Just a hint of a chuckle, and only if someone presses further.

JULIA:

Do I need to get new perfume too? The perfume I have might be too loud.

MAC:

No loud perfume is good. All the compromised people I know wear loud perfume.

JULIA:

How about music?

MAC:

Ideally you'll want to be listening to The Doors. If there is a song playing you don't like tell them to change because it brings up, "Memories." If they press further laugh bitterly and say some things are better left unsaid. If they still press you still then bite and look away. Then they'll look like monsters.

JULIA:

Most of the people I hang out with don't need help looking like monsters.

MAC:

It's always more fun to turn men into monsters than monsters into mice. Breaking the strong willed is inevitable as long as you have more power than them, but tricking a wise man to reveal his true nature is a whole different story.

JULIA:

So what's your scandal then?

MAC:

I'm more of the inspiration behind the scandals. My greatest controversy is treating love as arbitrary.

JULIA:

But love is arbitrary. Every time I do fall in love with someone I fall out of love with them by the time they finish their sentence.

MAC:

That's my whole point: Love is too tiresome to be a consistent thing. It comes in waves.

JULIA:

It's a fad to ensure babies are being pumped out.

MAC:

People also like to share their miseries. When you have another human dumping their personal garbage on you while you dump yours on them it's hard to see the point of dating at all.

JULIA:

No wonder people are falling in love with vampires these days. But I don't know what I'm saying, I must be drunk. (Laughs)

MAC:

That is dangerous talk, true, but these are dangerous times. One of the great things about the human race is how aware they are about their viciousness. The fact that this is a controversial issue is a sign of evolution.

JULIA:

Some of us seem more evolved than others.

MAC:

True, but I think times are changing. What's nice about dangerous times is they force conversations to start.

JULIA:

That would be good if people weren't so boring.

MAC:

But is hearing someone's politics really worse than hearing about their summer vacation? At least politics are common ground.

JULIA:

But yelling your experiences drunkenly into other people's faces is one of the most liberating things. Everyone has feelings that smell bad and need to be aired, wouldn't you say?

MAC:

Sure, but at least make it short. If everyone would talk in short and depressing antidotes I would have an easier time relating.

JULIA:

(Laughs)

Yes, if you are going to ramble you should make it short.

MAC:

It's these academic times we're living in. Everyone is always trying to break down and digest their problems and everyone else's. I feel people's hunger to inspect my life oozing from their words like acid. When they crowd together and talk it's a little culty.

JULIA:

Do you feel alienated?

MAC:

Not really. I'm just as broken and desperate as everyone else, but at least I have the courtesy to joke about it. The truth is too boring sometimes.

JULIA:

Are you telling me the truth?

MAC:

I've been talking arbitrary nonsense this whole time so you can't pin me down on anything. I learned it from my religious parents.

JULIA:

That sounds like it didn't suit you at all.

MAC:

I survived, which is more than can be said for the rest of my kin. But no, I didn't feel suited in the least. Now I don't care because it gives me something to complain about. I need something to complain about in order to fit in, otherwise I sound like I think I'm better than everyone.

JULIA:

It's not a bad scandal for a rebel type like yourself.

MAC:

I haven't said anything rebellious yet.

JULIA:

The rebel types like to read Nietzsche in public.

MAC:

What if I also like to read Nietzsche in private?

JULIA:

You're too self-aware to be submissive. There's a difference between troublemakers and rebels. If you're a trouble-making rebel you play punk-rock. Or if you want to make money by appealing to people who want to be rebellious.

MAC:

Or want to look it.

JULIA:

But without stooping to such depths as reading Nietzsche in public.

MAC:

True.

JULIA:

It's not as fake-rebel as saying you don't care though, so I'm not any better.

MAC:

Nowadays saying you don't care means you don't care about a few things. Nobody has time to actually not care anymore.

JULIA:

Not caring is its own bracket of philosophies and duties now.

MAC:

It's still fun to try on every now and then. Like an exotic hat.

JULIA:

Modern jobs are too demanding for leisurely thought.

MAC:

Then I guess it makes rebellion a kind of drug. Imagine the how high the French lower class was when they beheaded their slave owners. We're not oppressed enough to get that high.

JULIA:

It's hard to get high on victory when it's so easy to achieve. Voltaire said philosophers influence public opinion, but these days it can be anyone with a Twitter account.

MAC:

You sound bitter.

JULIA:

I didn't mean that as a bad thing at all. The more viewpoints the better. The only bad thing is people always trying to give such deep advice.

MAC:

They're always saying pithy metaphysical nonsense. They try to put love into words and gifts that will last, when everyone knows the longest love can possible last is the length of a drug trip.

JULIA:

Which drug?

MAC:

That depends on which person you fall in love with.

JULIA:

You seem to have this all figured out.

MAC:

No I'm just drunkenly saying my personal experiences into some stranger's face. Plus, a man with as many failed endeavors as I've had can't have very much in order.

JULIA:

Maybe what you've been secretly looking for is quantity all along.

MAC:

Quantity sounds nice on paper, but it can be tiresome.

JULIA:

Sounds like an excuse.

MAC:

Tiresome is not necessarily a bad thing. I'm merely explaining the reason so many men settle.

JULIA:

So you don't plan on settling?

MAC:

I'm very energetic with everything except physical exercise.

JULIA:

So settling will come as a last resort?

MAC:

Who knows? Some people have a tendency to make me very weak.

JULIA:

So love is no effort for you, only surrender?

MAC:

For me love is only a mixture of lust and lack of interest in other things. Every now and then admiration gets thrown into the mix, but that only comes before you really get to know someone.

JULIA:

You don't admire any of your friends?

MAC:

I admire some of things they've done.

JULIA:

Now you're really starting to sound like a vampire.

MAC:

Is that so bad to you?

JULIA:

Not at all. Just throwing out an observation.

MAC:

They can't ban vampire talk. Vampires have been our worst fantasy since the dawn of man.

JULIA:

You said fantasy.

MAC:

I meant to say fantasy. Everything delicious and fun is poisoning. The egotistical brain is constantly trying to find moral justifications for drugs and religion. The more aware we are of our insignificance in the universe the easier it is to swallow the idea of snuffing it all together. We humans are aware we are nothing but a predatory germ much like the vampire. If the vampires don't suck us all dry, we'll end up sucking the planet itself dry.

JULIA:

So if we love vampires so much, why are they being killed in the streets?

MAC:

Conservatives. Plus talk is shifting, as it always is.

JULIA:

I have noticed that too. It's funny how people only started to humanise them once those videos of them being executed started circling. It was a Vietnam effect.

MAC:

Ignorance often breeds fear.

JULIA:

Do you think we'll ever make peace with them?

MAC:

Yes. Less and less are people dying from their bites. Back in the medieval times they used to drain people because those were barbaric times even for us. Eventually I believe a numbered system will take place.

JULIA:

I wonder why they don't just eat animals.

MAC:

I read a theory that it's not the same for them.

JULIA:

Why not?

MAC:

The iron levels. Vampires have sensors in their teeth that let them feel their victim's heartbeats, like tigers. The fear, the lust, and the mixture of submission and control is very appetizing, so I hear. Humans have been fattening themselves like cattle from all this convenience. We want to be herded. Coming up with your own beliefs and opinions seems like a lot of work and requires tedious reading when you can be hypnotized and worship a charming entity. It's so much easier to throw themselves into groups and put your full trust in something as vague as a god or a country. You can see why the vampires look at us as some mass that both denies its animalism and yet follows the whims and fancies of those it cannot see and cannot know.

JULIA:

You're passionate about the issue.

MAC:

I'm not passionate about anything. Like you I'm just trying to observe.

JULIA:

I'm just judging by the amount of time you spent talking about it.

MAC:

Then yes, but only because this is a hot issue now. The news, movies, blogs, no matter where you turn all they can seem to talk about is vampires. Maybe it needs to be discussed this much.

JULIA:

They're trying to pass some bill or another to allow harsher penalties for those who hide nests.

MAC:

Who is trying?

JULIA:

Congress or something. I don't know, it was on the TV a few minutes ago.

MAC:

They're always trying to do something new.

JULIA:

It all sparked from that woman last week.

MAC:

We're already at war with them. What if we gave them a chance at peace?

JULIA:

That seems to be in the air. At least a momentary ceasefire.

MAC:

That's in the government's court, they're the oppressors.

JULIA:

I wouldn't go so far as to say that.

MAC:

Why not?

JULIA:

They suck our blood. It's as bad as rape.

MAC:

It doesn't end up in murder as often. Anyway I'm sure there exists perfectly rational ones among them as well who have been surviving for thousands of years just having a teaspoon a month.

JULIA:

Is that all they need to survive?

MAC:

Or some biologists say. But my point is we'll never know who could be helped and who must be shot if we just shoot them all. What if it can be cured? What if they can survive off the blood of some other animal instead of human? We'll never know these things if we keep shooting them on sight, wouldn't you say?

JULIA:

I would agree. I was just giving arguments I hear all the time to see how good you were on the subject.

MAC:

I feel that if Nietzsche were alive he'd at least sympathize with the poor beasts.

JULIA:

That's not fair, Nietzsche felt sympathy for everyone. I can tell you're very sympathetic to them though.

MAC:

Yes, I am, but only because I sensed it in you.

JULIA:

What gave me away?

MAC:

You seemed agitated when your friends started talking about those dead vampires. I figured you were either ignorant of the situation or had your own controversial viewpoint.

JULIA:

I don't fear death, only the pain of being boring. I couldn't live with myself if I was boring. That's why I'm not as vocal as I should be.

MAC:

But all the most boring people are the best at lying to themselves.

JULIA:

True. I could be lying to you. After all, don't boring people always insist they're fun?

MAC:

Everyone insists they're fun.

JULIA:

Most of the interesting people are quiet.

MAC:

That's still insisting you're more fun than everyone else by ignoring them. I don't believe in selfless people.

JULIA:

Neither do I, but I believe in people who are aware enough to know that not everything they say is interesting. Those are the only people I bother dating.

MAC:

Sounds like you've thought this out.

JULIA:

It's not always true about the dating, but I wish it was.

MAC:

Why? Bad history?

JULIA:

A boring history of being infatuated with people in the first ten minutes meeting them, then bored the next ten months. I only do it because of my stupid friends.

MAC:

Yeah, friends never know anything. If I listened to anything my friends said I would be either dead or married. I'm not sure which is worse. I guess being married is worse, at least death will reduce your carbon footprint and I wouldn't have to go into work tomorrow.

JULIA:

Do you work tomorrow?

MAC:

I'm a writer, I'm always at work.

JULIA:

That doesn't sound very fun.

MAC:

No relationship sounds fun on paper. It's why the institution of marriage is so easy to write about.

JULIA:

So what do you write about?

MAC:

I have to write about violent crime, it's the only thing I have the proper education for.

JULIA:

And what is your opinion of modern violent crime?

MAC:

It's passionate, as always. All the passion flying around turned me to Buddhism.

JULIA:

Really?

MAC:

Kind of. My beliefs or lack thereof seem to depend on the last time I saw a dead body.

JULIA:

You must write about vampires sometimes. Murder and vampires seem to go in the same paragraph one way or another.

MAC:

I write about love more than I do about vampires.

JULIA:

Your interest in them is getting less subtle.

MAC:

That's the old-fashioned. I think if they're going to start shooting people for speaking their minds they should counter in stuff like alcohol.

JULIA:

Maybe the whole thing is a conspiracy to get us to stop drinking.

MAC:

Probably.

JULIA:

Either way, I think I'm finished this beer and I promised someone I would go after this.

MAC:

Oh well, it happens, I guess. Shame, it's not very often two open-minded people such as us meet.

JULIA:

I think you just don't go out enough.

MAC:

I think we mingle in different circles.

JULIA:

Maybe, but there's a circle for everything these days. Our kind can always be sniffed out.

MAC:

I think that's what the government is hoping for.

JULIA:

You're such a conspiracy theorist.

MAC:

I'm pessimistic is all. I don't have the body to pull off a tinfoil hat.

JULIA:

They said I wouldn't need a tinfoil hat because of the thickness of my skull. Conspiracy theorist isn't as fun as aloof mystery-drug woman though.

MAC:

It's for the group's aesthetic value. You need one aloof girl to tie the picture together. It helps that you're a vampire sympathizer too.

JULIA:

I never said I was.

MAC:

If you weren't I'd have heard about it by now. Tact was never a trait of conservatives.

JULIA:

You don't think there are liberals who hate vampires?

MAC:

I'm sure there are, I've just never met one.

JULIA:

It doesn't matter much. It's not like there is anything to be done about it.

MAC:

(leans in)

Actually that statement isn't completely true.

JULIA:

(also leans in)

Do you know a direct way to help?

MAC:

I might.

JULIA:

Now you're really talking dangerous.

MAC:

I'm more afraid of the actions I don't take than the ones I do.

JULIA:

You sound fun. Why don't you finish that and walk me outside? I want to talk more about it but not here.

MAC:

Wise.

(gulps down drink and sets it down)

Let's go.

(JULIA clings onto MAC's arm and they leave.)

CURTAIN

ACT 2

Scene 1

SETTING: A basement with no windows. There lies a coffin in one corner and a desk with drawers on the other. A pair of old dueling pistols are mounted criss-cross above the coffin and beside it a painting of an old man in a suite of armor whose eyes are red. To the right corner there is a poker table and two chairs.

At Rise: LUCILE enters whistling with a broom, a dustpan, and a duster. She sets them on the floor and opens the coffin, then kneels by it.

LUCILE:
Are you awake?
(Sets the coffin lid down gently.)

CORNELIUS:
(sits up)
I don't want to get up.

LUCILE:
You don't have to get up yet as long as you're awake.

CORNELIUS:
I don't even want to wake up either. Put the lid back on.

LUCILE:
You're so morbid.

CORNELIUS:
I don't have the energy to keep up with your optimism. Leave me alone and let me die.

LUCILE:
(stands up)
Are you alright?

CORNELIUS:
I'm fine.

LUCILE:

You sound like you need some blood.

CORNELIUS:

I don't want to drink any blood. I want to die.

LUCILE:

Don't be grumpy. Grumpy only suits old humans.

CORNELIUS:

I wish I could be an old human.

LUCILE:

All of my friends would kill to be forever young, and if they were vampires they would. You're the only person who knows what it's like to have power but not use it, that's why you're so pure. Here, have a small bite from my wrist so you can get revived.

CORNELIUS:

I need to be alone. Forget about me, I fallen out of love with myself.

LUCILE:

(laughs)
What?

CORNELIUS:

Love is a lie and I don't have the strength to lie to myself anymore. The best parts about me are scurrying behind the baseboards.

LUCILE:

You need company from what I can tell. I'm here for you.

CORNELIUS:

No, you're here for you. If you let me have what I want you would be gone by now.

LUCILE:

I want to help you.

CORNELIUS:

Then let the darkness eat me.

LUCILE:

Don't say that.

CORNELIUS:

Why not?

LUCILE:

Because you're scaring me.

CORNELIUS:

I'm scary. That's why we normally get along.

LUCILE:

You're not scary, you're nice.

CORNELIUS:

You don't know me, Christine.

LUCILE:

My name is LUCILE.

CORNELIUS:

Right, you reminded me of someone, is all. People's names and personalities are such a blur these days.

LUCILE:

It's a lack of blood, here.
(She presents her wrist)

CORNELIUS:

Don't make this harder than it has to be.

LUCILE:

You're making me scared, and I don't get scared easily. We always had so much fun together.

CORNELIUS:

No, you've had a good run in spite of me. Go have fun and be young.

LUCILE:

I hate out there.

CORNELIUS:

No you don't.

LUCILE:

What game you playing?

CORNELIUS:

What do you mean?

LUCILE:

You're always playing some game. I can't imagine anyone being alive for as long as you have without playing games.

CORNELIUS:

I don't have the energy to play games with anyone.

LUCILE:

You drank so much of my blood that I think I at least deserve a small say in what you do with your life.

CORNELIUS:

It will be harder to accept the longer you wait there.

LUCILE:

But the beauty of being in love with a vampire is the promise of forever.

CORNELIUS:

Anything done "Forever," sounds unromantic.

LUCILE:

(Takes a step forward, gingerly)

You look paler than I've ever seen you.

CORNELIUS:

I'm fine.

LUCILE:

(Kneels again)

What made you think like this all of a sudden?

CORNELIUS:

The darkness.

LUCILE:

What do you mean?

CORNELIUS:

The darkness eats and is never satisfied. I've been marinating for too long without it taking a bite.

LUCILE:

What are you talking about?

CORNELIUS:

Aesthetics are beautiful nonsense that you have to feel the meaning to as well as hear.

LUCILE:

Why are you letting the darkness eat you?

CORNELIUS:

I'm too strong for Darwinism to kill me off, but too cowardly to do it myself. Sitting there and decaying is more my style.

LUCILE:

I won't let you.

CORNELIUS:

If you had a choice do you think I would be telling you all this?
If you don't come to terms with it I'm just going to hypnotize you.

LUCILE:

You wouldn't hypnotize me against my will.

CORNELIUS:

I don't want to hypnotize you at all.

LUCILE:

I think you're bored. When was the last time you saw SANDRA?

CORNELIUS:

I don't want to see SANDRA.

LUCILE:

SANDRA will be awake tonight too, MAC told me.

CORNELIUS:

Stop trying to fix me. Accept me for who I am and leave me be.

LUCILE:

You're so pale, you must be in such pain already.

CORNELIUS:

I don't deserve the pain, but I have earned death. If you survive for so long, it's only fair you earn death.

LUCILE:

Why am I able to persuade you to do everything else but this?

CORNELIUS:

You're a kid, you know about these worldly things. You go out in public and you let reflect on you, that's why I listen to you talk for so long.

LUCILE:

I thought you listened to me because you like me?

CORNELIUS:

I don't really pay too much attention to what you say. Take advice from someone who's been around as long as me, never listen to the people you like. All the most charming people live in their own worlds floating above this mud ball where the rest of us trudge daily.

LUCILE:

But I don't even tell you to do anything.

CORNELIUS:

That's why I like you. I won't miss much about this world, Christine, but I will miss you.

LUCILE:

You called me Christine again.

CORNELIUS:

You look like more of Christine than a LUCILE.

LUCILE:

I don't like this new you. You used to make me feel special and now you can't even remember my name. You're losing your mind and I need to find you some help.

CORNELIUS:

The only help is to be devoured. If you knew the real me you'd maybe have a little nibble.

LUCILE:

I don't care about your past.

CORNELIUS:

That's a stupid thing to say. I don't like it when you're stupid.

LUCILE:

I don't know where all of this is coming from.

CORNELIUS:

It was here all along, I'm just too tired to cover it up. You better leave me to die while your image of me is still intact.

LUCILE:

You're sick and I'm going to make you better. You're stronger than this.

CORNELIUS:

I was only as strong as social protocol tells me to be, now I just want to be myself. I want to sink into a puddle of my own thoughts deep enough for the light of truth not to reach.

LUCILE:

Now that sounds stupid.

CORNELIUS:

Thank you. I was never allowed to be who I am, much less stupid. Humans don't even allow each other to be stupid, unless they're rich.

LUCILE:

Who makes these rules you're talking about? All day most people I meet are stupid.

CORNELIUS:

No, your society is full of subservients. People stupid enough to be smart are thrown in jail.

LUCILE:

They want to start shooting us.

CORNELIUS:

Who?

LUCILE:

People who rebel and help vampires.

CORNELIUS:

I meant who wants to start shooting you?

Lucile:

Republicans. Who else? They're trying to call us terrorists.

CORNELIUS:

They were only trying to get into your pants.

LUCILE:

You can't know that.

CORNELIUS:

I know human men better than anything. Men are as simple to read as their hairstyles. A few crazy ones will want to shoot you, sure, but for most it's a display of dominance.

LUCILE:

You're melting everything and everyone into one big pot that you can direct your grumpiness at. You can't even distinguish between me and some woman named

Christine.

CORNELIUS:

She was even stupider than you.

LUCILE:

Because she listened to you like me?

CORNELIUS:

Why you've listened to me at all these past years is beyond me. The reward for turning in a vampire has gone up last week.

LUCILE:

How did you know that? You were supposed to be sleeping.

CORNELIUS:

If I did all the things I was supposed to I'd have been killed thousands of years ago. I told you I've been awake staring into the darkness.

LUCILE:

But if you were in your coffin, who told you?

CORNELIUS:

If you knew the amount of rats that were under my control you'd be scared.

LUCILE:

I thought you only used your rats as weapons?

CORNELIUS:

I don't talk about my rats much because to be honest I'm rather ashamed of spying on people. I spy on you all the time.

LUCILE:

You have the right to, I'm yours.

CORNELIUS:

I like you better when you're no ones.

LUCILE:

Well I'm no one's then, but only because independence tickles your fancy.

CORNELIUS:

You know that doesn't count.

LUCILE:

Yes, I know. This is how it feels when someone is difficult. Now, start seducing me into giving you blood.

CORNELIUS:

I have no regrets. I'm not sad and I'm not playing some trick. I want to die.

LUCILE:

(stands up)

Then I can't deal with you anymore. I'm calling SANDRA.

CORNELIUS:

If you call SANDRA I'm going to kill you.

LUCILE:

If you're such a monster, go ahead and kill me. Shred me and lick me up faster than the flies can. I'd die happily if it meant looking into your eyes once more and seeing the animal I fell in love with.

CORNELIUS:

You know I couldn't kill you. So if you're quite done falling out of love with me, kindly place the lid back on my coffin and put on some jazz.

LUCILE:

If you want me to stab you in the heart I will.

CORNELIUS:

Why would I want that?

LUCILE:

I've killed vampires before.

CORNELIUS:

Could you kill me?

LUCILE:

I could because you would want me to. I've done it before.

CORNELIUS:

Who have you killed?

LUCILE:

Two of my friends. I waited until they slept like they asked, then stabbed them in their hearts with a steak I made myself.

CORNELIUS:

You're lying. You would have told be about this before if it were true.

LUCILE:

I don't like talking about it. I loved them.

CORNELIUS:

Love is nothing more than the body lying to the brain saying there is a reason behind all the draining chemicals.

LUCILE:

I was happy with them.

CORNELIUS:

Happiness is nothing but the brain lying to the body.

LUCILE:

Then what did it mean to us?

CORNELIUS:

It was a distraction.

LUCILE:

We loved each other and you know it.

CORNELIUS:

I do know it, it proves how stupid we are.

LUCILE:

So this was all a mistake?

CORNELIUS:

Life is a mistake. You're supposed to enjoy the ride or something.

LUCILE:

I don't enjoy it when you talk like this.

CORNELIUS:

That's your prerogative. The main reason I'm being honest like this is I wish you were honest with me.

LUCILE:

How could I be more honest with you?

CORNELIUS:

I wish you would call me a burden.

LUCILE:

You're not a burden, I love you.

CORNELIUS:

That's exactly why I'm a burden. Imagine how much of the world you could have seen without me.

LUCILE:

On my salary? I don't think so.

CORNELIUS:

What about all the missed romance?

LUCILE:

I was never good at pretending to laugh and be jealous. I have sex with whoever I want and save the emotional side of me for you.

CORNELIUS:

Am I supposed to feel lucky?

LUCILE:

You're the luckiest vampire to ever exist because you have me. How many other people would be standing here still arguing with you?

CORNELIUS:

I don't see what your problem is with me dying.

LUCILE:

You'd be killing yourself.

CORNELIUS:

No, I told you I couldn't kill myself. I want to let the darkness eat me.

LUCILE:

The abyss does not have a name, you idiot. It doesn't have a personality and it won't eat you.

CORNELIUS:

I've seen it.

LUCILE:

The argument I always make for vampires whenever I get into arguments with my friends is that if you didn't suck our blood you'd be committing suicide.

CORNELIUS:

You're not wrong.

LUCILE:

Of course I'm not wrong.

CORNELIUS:

I'm still right, though, I would be eaten.

LUCILE:

You're delusional because you're sad.

CORNELIUS:

You can be here when it happens. I'd hate it if you were, but I'd allow it to show you I'm right.

LUCILE:

I won't let you die. You're the flesh of an everlasting ideal.

CORNELIUS:

This is not a cult and I am not a cult leader.

LUCILE:

Cults are stupid, religion is for the weak, capitalism is for exploitation, and communism is for the lazy. I just love you.

CORNELIUS:

You love not having to think for yourself.

LUCILE:

I think for you. I plan how to keep you alive. I base my philosophy on whatever whim you come up with next.

CORNELIUS:

That's weird.

LUCILE:

That's why I'm so passionate about it.

CORNELIUS:

I don't want that. Stop doing that and put the coffin lid back on me.

LUCILE:

(picks up the coffin lid)
I'm confiscating this for now.

CORNELIUS:

That's not going to stop me from dying, that's just going to make it less theatrical.

LUCILE:

What do you mean?

CORNELIUS:

We were born from the darkness like this. In the darkness we ran in endless circles, we ate whatever we stumbled across and had bites taken out of us by much bigger things.

LUCILE:

What things?

CORNELIUS:

They had no form, or maybe they did but it was impossible to tell because of how dark it was. There was no animosity, just destruction and reconstruction. Then we escaped.

LUCILE:

From the ground?

CORNELIUS:

Yes, we managed to pull ourselves up through humans. It was a very painful process.

LUCILE:

How?

CORNELIUS:

They were the only things warm enough to host us. Even the animals were not so subservient.

LUCILE:

You're not making sense.

CORNELIUS:

You're the one who can't make sense of it. Its okay, I forgive you. I didn't give you much to work with. I can't remember much of those days anyhow.

LUCILE:

The hunger has gone to your head.

CORNELIUS:

If a little hunger was all it took to make me insane I would have killed you months ago.

LUCILE:

But you love me.

CORNELIUS:

Crazy people always kill the ones they love.

LUCILE:

You had an idea for me to follow.

CORNELIUS:

No, you made all that up. That was only seduction in order to win over some of your blood.

LUCILE:

Seduction or not, it was what I lived for.

CORNELIUS:

Too bad, I've run out of charm.

LUCILE:

I used to repeat your speeches to me about punk-rock to my friends.

CORNELIUS:

But that's the problem with revolutionary talk, it never stops revolting. It's a cycle that eats everything you feed it. At first you take over power, then minds, then spirits until you are all slaves again to something new.

LUCILE:

You've lost your pride.

CORNELIUS:

You think I want to die because I'm not proud enough? That would be such a convenient remedy for you. You haven't raised your voice once through this whole ordeal. I thought you would raise your voice once and be done. You said too many words for me to not suspect you already knew what was going on.

LUCILE:

I didn't suspect this was coming. I've killed vampires before when they asked me to. My friends wanted to die before they were eaten.

CORNELIUS:

Funny choice of words there.

LUCILE:

They said you get eaten by the ground from where you came. I didn't believe them either.

CORNELIUS:

The rats tell me it's not as painful as it sounds.

LUCILE:

But you don't want me to kill you.

CORNELIUS:

Nobody is killing anyone. I'm following an old tradition.

LUCILE:

I worshipped someone who stood strong in the face of the old traditions.

CORNELIUS:

Living is the oldest and most boring of all the traditions.

LUCILE:

Live for me then. Believe in me as I believed in you.

CORNELIUS:

It's because I believe in you that I don't want to even go on talking anymore.

LUCILE:

Because you hate being wrong.

CORNELIUS:

Everyone hates being wrong.

LUCILE:

Do you think you'll corrupt me?

CORNELIUS:

I don't want you to kill yourself.

LUCILE:

What do you have faith for me to do?

CORNELIUS:

I have faith you'll be in the future, that is all I need for now. I want you to eat all of the water.

LUCILE:

Stop it.

CORNELIUS:

It's not good enough for you to drink the water, Christine, you have to eat it up.

LUCILE:

I can't listen to what you're saying.

CORNELIUS:

You're not supposed to listen to it, you're supposed to feel it out like the bass for that song Run through the Jungle. It's groovy and chilling at the same time but not if you only listen to the number sequence.

LUCILE:

I'm calling SANDRA.

CORNELIUS:

Call her and you'll be sorry. You should've called the Crusaders.

LUCILE:

How can you say that? You've killed other vampires for saying less.

CORNELIUS:

I shouldn't have.

LUCILE:

What?

CORNELIUS:

I know who you're talking about and I shouldn't have killed her, she was only speaking her mind.

LUCILE:

She was weak and giving the floor to her weakness. I wish you could hear yourself.

CORNELIUS:

You can never hear yourself in the past, that's the problem.

LUCILE:

I don't think I want to hear you anymore either.

CORNELIUS:

So put on that stupid lid and let's be done with this whole deal.

LUCILE:

You mean life.

CORNELIUS:

Yes, this whole deal of life.

LUCILE:

It's not a deal, it's a responsibility.

CORNELIUS:

Who says? I didn't sign a contract.

LUCILE:

You have people who depend on you.

CORNELIUS:

Those people need to start depending on themselves.

LUCILE:

If you die, all the people you killed to survive will have died in vain.

CORNELIUS:

The people I've killed needed killing, for the most part. Christine didn't, but she was the exception.

LUCILE:

(slowly)

You killed an innocent woman?

CORNELIUS:

From the humanist argument nobody is innocent and from the post-humanist argument everyone is.

LUCILE:

Cut that out. Did you kill an innocent woman?

CORNELIUS:

Innocence is arbitrary.

LUCILE:

CORNELIUS, did you kill an innocent woman?

CORNELIUS:

I killed a woman who posed no threat to me.

LUCILE:

Oh God.

CORNELIUS:

God isn't here anymore. If it was, the humans would have eaten it already.

LUCILE:

Why did you kill her?

CORNELIUS:

It was strange, she seemed so weak.

LUCILE:

That's too far, now I know you're lying.

CORNELIUS:

I killed her because she wouldn't let me die. Then I drank her blood and I wanted to live.

LUCILE:

Well it only seems logical at that point.

CORNELIUS:

Good, Lucy, I knew you were capable of sass. If there's something good that came of all this it's that you and I finally got to have an argument like couples do.

LUCILE:

Stop talking about that.

CORNELIUS:

Stop taking it so personally. The world doesn't revolve around you. I think you'd even be relieved to see me go.

LUCILE:

To have lost my god?

CORNELIUS:

Many Christians are relieved to lose their religion.

LUCILE:

Not if they truly believed.

CORNELIUS:

Like them, in time you will realize what you really worshipped.

LUCILE:

You think I'm so naive, but I know exactly what you are. Even the Christians know their God sucks their blood. It used to demand sacrifices from them because it was hungry. Soon that wasn't even enough, it had to have their souls too. It sent its only son because he was bored of eating their plain flesh. Now they give themselves from their birth and are martyred over years. To this day God sinks its teeth into their personalities as deep as they'll go and the Christians wiggle to help burrow them further in. You're being submissive because it's convenient to you.

Cornelius:

I never lied to myself about this, but I have lied to you. You've been worshipping a false idol.

LUCILE:

A false idol?

CORNELIUS:

You're a hypocrite, laughing at those poor sheep while eating even yellower grass. At least their savior tried to bring about some altruistic ideal instead of being too cowardly to even try. At least they built something, even if it had faults.

LUCILE:

They built something on the bodies and freedoms of the many lives they crushed.

CORNELIUS:

It was progress, we did the same.

LUCILE:

I can't believe what I'm hearing.

CORNELIUS:

The elder vampires knew what we were getting into when we chose not to die. They said we worshipped the devil back then and they were right, but it was a much more subtle one than they hoped. This same thing is repeating itself today.

LUCILE:

So fight it. You've always lived by your own rules, why start paying attention now?

CORNELIUS:

I'm too empathetic to live the life was I used to. My rats have seen too much suffering. Whether it's the egotistical losing power or the superego growing stronger I'm not sure. The God of the Christians professed to die for your sins, but really he was glad to go back to heaven. He committed suicide out of boredom. Every noble ambition begins with boredom.

LUCILE:

How can you be bored? You've lived the most exciting life out of anyone I know, and I haven't even heard half it.

CORNELIUS:

There is a lot that you wouldn't understand.

LUCILE:

I think I understand just fine; I think you've become weak.

CORNELIUS:

Tired of being an animal and weak are the same thing, true. What if I've finally read too many books?

LUCILE:

You can't even stand on your feet.

CORNELIUS:

I can, I just don't want to.

LUCILE:

That's what addicts say.

CORNELIUS:

I want to die in this pose .
(He crosses his arms)
Only with the lid on.

LUCILE:

I'm not giving you the lid.

CORNELIUS:

It's like the hood they put over the condemned man. I don't want to see my executor.

LUCILE:

Who are you talking about?

CORNELIUS:

The very air around me is going to process me. It's going to turn to little mouths and break me down like stomach acid.

LUCILE:

That's horrible.

CORNELIUS:

The darkness is always hungry, so hungry that it will be over very quick. Whenever we used to get eaten in the days before I surfaced it was always quick. No one had time to savor any meals. It was this repression that was part of how lavishly we dine now. I myself would prefer to be savored, but such is life.

LUCILE:

Nothing is going to eat you. Your life will be scattered and forgotten like your ashes which I will flush down the toilet.

CORNELIUS:

You have it wrong. Just as your creator grew you so it could pluck you when the time is right and feast on your life, so did my creator the devil do for me.

LUCILE:

There is no devil.

CORNELIUS:

Yes there is. It has no ulterior motive like the Crusaders say he does, but is very thirsty for my soul. You gave your life force to me for the sole reason that I give life to the dark prince. I was raised as one of his finest crops.

LUCILE:

You're delusional, I'm calling SANDRA.

CORNELIUS:

I hate that woman.

LUCILE:

She's your bride.

CORNELIUS:

She's aggressively stupid and I should've killed her years ago.

LUCILE:

She loves you and you love her.

CORNELIUS:

I should've known she was trouble by how easy it was to win her over. She read too hard into my ideals and now she's a monster.

LUCILE:

She's free like you used to be and now you're jealous.

CORNELIUS:

Would you put your pride away and just listen to me for one moment?

LUCILE:

I don't have a stake in this war.

CORNELIUS:

Yes you do. I used to have pride and intelligence like you and like you my pride was stronger. Now my sense of duty is stronger.

LUCILE:

To God?

CORNELIUS:

To the devil. I'm going to finally allow myself to be recycled. I was born a suicidal hippie and I'm just coming out of the closet now. Only the Christians want eternal things.

LUCILE:

If we both die tonight it will be your fault.

CORNELIUS:

True, that's why I'm telling you to run now.

LUCILE:

I'm beginning to think you're up to one of your tricks.

CORNELIUS:

What tricks?

LUCILE:

You've been trying to trick me all night. I don't believe for a second that it comes of no benefit to you.

CORNELIUS:

The only reason you know I'm tricky is because I've tricked you for years.

LUCILE:

You haven't tricked me because you need me.

CORNELIUS:

See how easy it is to make you sour with me all at once? You went from 0 to Tupac faster than I did when I entered the East Side.

LUCILE:

(smiles)

I could never hate you.

CORNELIUS:

You hate squirrels when they run in front of your car.

LUCILE:

That's not hate, I'm helping Darwinism along so future squirrels grow up knowing not to run out in the road. As for you, I wish I could just twist you around like a Rubik's Cube so you were right again.

CORNELIUS:

You don't really sound sane either.

LUCILE:

No, I don't.

CORNELIUS:

I taught you to respect my wisdom.

LUCILE:

But you've gone nuts, so who is to blame? You overtook my thoughts and senses like the mix of salt and sugar. One drop of you spread over my lips like expensive scotch. How was I not supposed to eventually copy your movements like a well-trained monkey? Do think I don't know that I'm to blame? This is much more of an inconvenience to me than it is to you.

CORNELIUS:

You're right.

LUCILE:

Stop saying that, I know it's another one of your tricks.

CORNELIUS:

Everything is one of my tricks according to you.

LUCILE:

Because you're tricky. I'm tired of arguing with you.

CORNELIUS:

But that was fun.

LUCILE:

Yes, but not for me.

CORNELIUS:

What an awful excuse.

LUCILE:

It's true. I'm so weak and I hate the sight of blood.

CORNELIUS:

Vampires are strong and we love blood. It's a perfect match.

LUCILE:

I wish you'd stop.

CORNELIUS:

Stop what?

LUCILE:

Stop trying to help me. You're making me sick.

CORNELIUS:

I make myself sick, this is how it feels.

LUCILE:

Please stop.

(She leans the lid of the coffin against the box by CORNELIUS)

There, take it.

CORNELIUS:

Thank you.

LUCILE:

You win.

CORNELIUS:

What do I win? This lid?

LUCILE:

Just tell me what I should do and I'll do it.

CORNELIUS:

Leave me alone.

LUCILE:

No, tell me what it is you actually want me to do. You win.

CORNELIUS:

Is our relationship really that emotionally abusive that someone always has to win something?

LUCILE:

We're no more abusive than any other relationship I've ever been in, but you are more devious than any human I know. It's weird because you could also get anything you want by brute force.

CORNELIUS:

I warned you that this was a waste of time. You're driving with the windows up in the summer, sitting here with me. Go be a youth and let me die as my melancholy culture intended.

LUCILE:

Stop with all of that. It's too stuffy in here, I'm going to get SANDRA.

(Turns to go.)

LUCILE.

CORNELIUS:

(Stops and turns to face him)
Yes?

LUCILE:

CORNELIUS:
You know this choice I've made to let myself be eaten by the darkness?

Yes?

LUCILE:

CORNELIUS:
SANDRA has the very opposite philosophy. She very hedonistic.

I know, I've met her.

LUCILE:

CORNELIUS:
Recently she's worse, she believes her own hype.

So? That's necessary even for human's survival.

LUCILE:

It won't make us last.

CORNELIUS:

What do you mean?

LUCILE:

CORNELIUS:
If we all live for ourselves the gods will have no more use for us and we'll die.

But isn't the Lucifer experiment just one following his own path?

LUCILE:

CORNELIUS:
There are many devils in this world and many of them tell you to do whatever you want.
I serve the prince of darkness.

What are you talking about?

LUCILE:

CORNELIUS:

I serve one who wishes to have nothing to do with this world but begrudgingly gives his power for the sake of art and nothing else. Otherwise he would have persuaded your God to let this planet die millions of years ago.

LUCILE:

I thought Satan and God were at war?

CORNELIUS:

It's more of a chess match. They talk for hours, apparently.

LUCILE:

Who told you that?

CORNELIUS:

The other spirits who lived with me under the earth before we had forms.

LUCILE:

So they were spirits now?

CORNELIUS:

We were nothing but notions possessing whatever we fell on. The decision to become physical was not conscious.

LUCILE:

What does this have to do with me calling SANDRA?

CORNELIUS:

We forms rose to the top because of our viciousness. Vampires kill more vampires than crusaders do.

LUCILE:

Are you going to kill SANDRA?

CORNELIUS:

I might have to.

LUCILE:

She might kill you.

CORNELIUS:

She won't.

LUCILE:

Why not?

CORNELIUS:

I won't let her.

LUCILE:

But you want to die anyways?

CORNELIUS:

I want the darkness to swallow me.

LUCILE:

I'm leaving.

(Starts walking up the stairs)

CORNELIUS:

Can you at least shut the light?

LUCILE:

I'm leaving it on so you can't be with yourself. Being with yourself is no good for you anymore.

CORNELIUS:

Don't make me get out of this coffin.

LUCILE:

Go ahead, I dare you to try.

CORNELIUS:

Alright, you win.

LUCILE:

Tonight has made me sick of winning.

(She leaves and shuts the upstairs door behind her.)

(CORNELIUS waits for a few seconds until he hears the front door shut. He pulls out a bottle of whisky from beneath his robes and unscrews it, taking a small pull. He puts the lid back on and stands up from the box, lumbering over to put the whisky on the poker table. He stretches, then walks to a drawer a few paces away and opens it, taking out a pack of cigarettes, a lighter and puts them on the poker table too. He pours himself a small glass of liquor, finishes it in one shot, and lights a cigarette. He puffs for a few seconds, then erupts into coughing.)

CORNELIUS:

Jesus that's awful.

(CORNELIUS puts the cigarette back in his mouth and reaches in the drawer and pulls out a horn of gun powder, primer, flint, a ramrod, two lead balls, and two patches setting them on the poker table. He limps over to the wall and takes the two pistols

down and also puts them on the table. He loads the two flints into the two cocks, then half cocks them both. He puts a little powder down the barrel of one pistol and a lot down the other before tamping both down. He tamps both balls wrapped in both patches into both barrels. He then opens the flash pan of both pistols, pouring one a third of the way of primer, while the other he fills to the brim. He erupts into coughing again then pours himself another glass, drinking it.)

CORNELIUS:

When the darkness eats me at least it can get drunk too.

(He laughs and erupts into coughing again.)

CURTAIN

ACT 3

Scene 1

(Scene: SANDRA's room. There is a bed, a bedside table with a cellphone and a lamp, a vanity with a pair of shoes and socks beside it, a chair, and a window. SANDRA, a female vampire, is lounging on her bed, watching television. She is wearing jeans, a brown belt, and a white singlet.)

(At Rise: Her cell phone rings and she picks it up.)

SANDRA:

Hello? ... Are you alright? ... What's with him? ... What? ...

(JASPER enters strapping on a protective vest with a white cross over the heart.)

SANDRA:

He was always a little softer than the rest of us, but to just die? ... I can't believe... No, I can help. We are still married... Alright, I'll be over soon.

(she turns off the cell phone and sets it down.)

JASPER:

Who was that?

SANDRA:

(stands up from out of bed and begins to comb her hair, looking at her reflection in the vanity)

A loose end from my former life.

JASPER:

Give me the address and I'll tie it up.

SANDRA:

He's a friend.

JASPER:

So were the others.

SANDRA:

No, the others I was friendly with. I'm rarely friendly with any of my actual friends.

JASPER:

What's different about this one?

Technically he's my husband. SANDRA:

(forcibly chuckles)
The thought of you married. JASPER:

I've had three husbands? SANDRA:

What? JASPER:

They were all dorks but some were geniuses. SANDRA:

Are you actually serious? Were you actually married? JASPER:

I've gone through marriage fads. SANDRA:

Why haven't I heard about any of these guys before? JASPER:

Because they're dorks. SANDRA:

What about the phone call? JASPER:

He's such a dork that now he wants to kill himself over some nihilistic Buddhist crap. SANDRA:

Nihilism and Buddhism are different things. JASPER:

I can never tell any of your religions apart. SANDRA:

Neither are religions. JASPER:

Then why do people preach them? SANDRA:

JASPER:

Why are you going to help this dork out?

SANDRA:

He amused me at times.

JASPER:

Who hasn't?

SANDRA:

True, but I actually liked him.

JASPER:

You vampires have a history of killing things dear to your hearts.

SANDRA:

I know, that's why he's a loose end.

JASPER:

Sounds like it's a problem that takes care of itself, if he's suicidal.

SANDRA:

It's not like that. He's wanted random things before.

JASPER:

Like what?

SANDRA:

Like his vampire island with a new government and religion. Or the times he tried to be human. He's always trying new things out of boredom. I haven't seen him in a few weeks and he probably wants attention.

JASPER:

Does he know about me?

SANDRA:

I've been with other guys, but never a crusader. I won't tell him about you.

JASPER:

Why not? (Takes a pistol out of his pocket) He can come after me.

SANDRA:

He's one of the old lords, the first vampires. He's been playing it smart and avoiding you people for years.

JASPER:

"We people," eh?

SANDRA:

Yes, he's killed many of you people as well.

JASPER:

I've heard about a few vampire's being able to turn themselves into mist, is he one of those?

SANDRA:

(opens the drawer and takes out a leather jacket)

He says he talks to the rats.

(She puts it on.)

JASPER:

That's it?

SANDRA:

It's not true, but he can play tricks.

JASPER:

Like hypnotisms?

SANDRA:

It's more than that. I feel him caressing my shoulders when a strong breeze passes or the wind will open the door and for a moment I can see his bright predator eyes behind it. Or a rodent will look at me in a funny way that will remind me of him. At least he wants me to think it's him. He's manipulative.

JASPER:

So he's been surviving on diplomacy alone for thousands of years without any of the other strengths these legendary lords have?

SANDRA:

He used to be cunning.

JASPER:

And now?

SANDRA:

I've feared he was losing his mind in the past, it gets tiring.

JASPER:

Is that why you left him?

SANDRA:

I left him because he talked too much about the wrong things. He was such an adult at the end.

JASPER:

I don't understand where such a lord could hide?

SANDRA:

He hides in the inner city. He does well surrounded by people.

JASPER:

You make him out to be almost social.

SANDRA:

Some of us really are, if you give us a chance.

JASPER:

Do any of the addresses you give me contain these alleged social creatures?

SANDRA:

The addresses I give are people who feed on my territory because unfortunately I'm not one of the social ones.

JASPER:

You're dangerous.

SANDRA:

You've probably killed more people than me.

JASPER:

I wasn't judging you. I know who I am, I was just making sure you know who you are.

SANDRA:

Do you think I'm still in love with him?

JASPER:

I've never heard you talk like you did when you talked about him right now.

SANDRA:

He lives his life very peculiarly, it's hard not to mention.

JASPER:

So he does still have a place in your heart?

SANDRA:

You crusaders think everything has to be one way or the other. I was willing to stop talking about this a while ago.

JASPER:

No, now you've piqued my interest.

SANDRA:

Shame, I liked you as a brute.

JASPER:

I don't have time to get people to like me.

SANDRA:

Oh my God you must be fun parties.

JASPER:

Tell me where he lives.

SANDRA:

So you can kill him?

JASPER:

So I can kill him.

SANDRA:

Baby, you don't really think I love that old man still?

JASPER:

How do I know what you're thinking? Isn't that the allure of dangerous people?

SANDRA:

I haven't been in love with anyone lately. Lately I've just been biting people for the thrill of it. I haven't killed someone in weeks, I swear.

JASPER:

Kill him then.

SANDRA:

(laughs)

Once he did really feed a little bit of himself to spiders.

JASPER:

Goodness.

SANDRA:

He wasn't trying to prove a point then. He said something like, "Look at this," then spiders came and ate his eye.

JASPER:

That's crazy.

SANDRA:

It wasn't so bad; he took it out of its socket and offered it to them first.

JASPER:

Are you sure it wasn't an illusion?

SANDRA:

No, but I'm not totally sure you're not one of his illusions either.

JASPER (standing back):

That's scary.

SANDRA:

That's his whole deal. I can see he's gotten into your head as well and you haven't even met him.

JASPER:

Take that back.

SANDRA:

Or you'll shoot me?

JASPER:

(draws out a pistol from his belt but does not point it at her)
Right through the head.

SANDRA:

Oh my God you're such a drag. I wonder when the novelty of sleeping with the enemy will wear off and we'll actually kill each other.

JASPER:

I don't know.

(tosses the gun on the bed)
Considering how much fun sleeping with the enemy is, it might be awhile.

SANDRA:

What's that for?

JASPER:

In case you husband tries anything too ambitious.

(SANDRA picks it up and inspects it.)

SANDRA:

You got this gun from Lex Carson, right?

JASPER:

I got it from the crusader who killed Lex Carson. How did you know it was his?

SANDRA:

He gave my old husband a switchblade in the 1990's. Everything he owned had a rose emblem on the right side.

JASPER:

You sound more and more attached to him as time goes on.

SANDRA:

I could've killed him when I left him, as I did with my other husband, but I told you he amused me.

JASPER:

I don't believe you.

SANDRA:

That's your prerogative.

JASPER:

Maybe you're one of his loose ends.

SANDRA:

I don't think so. If he wanted to kill me he'd have done so years ago.

JASPER:

You must have been in love with him at some point, you only see the parts of him you want to see.

SANDRA:

Being a therapist suits even less than being concerned.

JASPER:

I don't trust vampires.

SANDRA:

(finishes putting on her socks and shoes)
Except the ones you sleep with.

JASPER:

I don't trust those either.

SANDRA:

(picks up the gun and studies it)

I don't know how you could part with such a nice toy.

JASPER:

I spend my time collecting nice toys. That one isn't very impressive.

SANDRA:

It's been so long since I used one. The last time I used a gun was to shoot my husband.

JASPER:

Your human husband?

SANDRA:

No, the suicidal one. We used to duel with this pair of pistols he kept with him. It made me feel extra immortal.

JASPER:

Sounds like something humans would do when they're drunk.

SANDRA:

Vampires don't need alcohol to do stupid things.

JASPER:

You people are stupid enough.

SANDRA:

It does take a blind sort of ignorance to reach as many people as we have. Of course the Christians reach out to a much wider crowd, wouldn't you say?

JASPER:

(laughs)

You're going to hell.

SANDRA:

Only on vacation.

JASPER:

Somewhere you must be aware of that. Somehow surely you must be able to comprehend what you're doing, right?

SANDRA:

Explain why?

JASPER:

You turned away from God.

SANDRA:

A little nose thumb never hurt anyone. Why can't your God accept rejection like a normal person?

JASPER:

Because he's not a normal person. Please, why don't you try it?

SANDRA:

Crosses burn me, holy water is worse than acid, and saying the name of your God's son makes me feel sick. How can you define good and evil when I couldn't be good if I tried?

JASPER:

Good is a social contract.

(He steps forward and starts playing with her hair.)

SANDRA:

A social contract written by a few prudes a very long time ago. Also, don't stand so close, I can feel the heat coming off your chest.

JASPER:

(steps back)

So many vampires have told me about how they're the superior race, though they can't even stand a little light of the truth.

SANDRA:

Don't lie, I'm the only vampire you actually know.

JASPER:

I always let them have a few last words before the silver.

SANDRA:

Don't do that, it's cruel.

JASPER:

What, shoot them with silver?

SANDRA:

No, that's only natural. Don't give them any last words.

JASPER:

It seems only humane.

SANDRA:

That's gloating, it's inhumane.

JASPER:

You're inhumane.

SANDRA:

Yes, but I'm supposed to be.

JASPER:

That's not an excuse.

SANDRA:

Too bad, you'll have to take it. Don't giving us a chance to reflect on our demises, it's awful.

JASPER:

Your husband seems to not mind it.

SANDRA:

He's evil.

JASPER:

You just said there was no good and evil.

SANDRA:

I know, but he's different. Normally how it goes is one side eats the other and finds excuses along the way. That's always been it, but it's not like that for CORNELIUS. He hates himself.

JASPER:

Is that altruistic to you?

SANDRA:

No, it's pitiful, but then so is altruism.

JASPER:

So what are you going to do about it?

SANDRA:

What do you care?

JASPER:

I love you.

SANDRA:

So I've heard.

JASPER:

Take the revolver, the bullets are silver tipped.

SANDRA:

Fine.

(SANDRA picks up the gun and tucks it into her belt.)

JASPER:

Kill him to be safe.

SANDRA:

I might, but only if he needs it.

JASPER:

Be careful.

SANDRA:

Where's the fun in that?

(SANDRA walks to the window, then opens it and jumps out.)

JASPER:

(runs to the window and shouts)

I'M SERIOUS!

CURTAIN

Act 4

Scene 1

(Scene: Nighttime in a mostly quiet avenue in the suburbs.)

(At Rise: MAC and JULIA are walking along the dimly lit streets. There is a bus stop with a post and a garbage bin beside it.)

JULIA:

Hold up, I got to sit down.

(They sit on the bus stop bench, then begin to watch the fading)

MAC:

Want a cigarette?

JULIA:

More than social reform, but I quit years ago.

MAC:

Why not celebrate your moderation by having one?

JULIA:

(laughs)
You're awful

(she takes a hip flask out of her boot and hands it to him.) Here, take this.

MAC:

Why?

JULIA:

Because it burns.

MAC:

Can't you be normal rebel and be into drugs? I have work tomorrow.

JULIA:

I do too. I can't be up all night doing drugs. You were just drinking.

MAC:

(takes a drink)

I can't be hungover tomorrow.

(Hands it back to her.)

JULIA:

(takes a drink)

Then I must ask, in the interest of both of us getting to work tomorrow,

(drinks again, screws the lid back on, and puts it away)

are you taking me to see a vampire?

MAC:

I was planning more of an elaborate set up, but yes.

JULIA:

What was your big plan?

MAC:

We cross a bridge on the way to the alleged quaint bar and since tonight was a full moon I would attempt a kiss.

JULIA:

Interesting. Would your visit to this vampire be a lead up to something bigger?

MAC:

I'd gauge by your reaction to the first events.

JULIA:

What's its name?

MAC:

I won't go that far yet, because I'm still not 100% sure about you. I will tell you that he is a little odd.

JULIA:

I hear they all are.

MAC:

Most are just too confident. Their charm is bold and subtle depending on the mood. I've seen too many of them die to care about that though, it's just a survival mindset. It also makes the ones like my friend an even greater gem to find.

JULIA:

Because he's nice?

MAC:

He's not very nice, actually. But considering he's devious enough to have this city under command and he doesn't is testament to his humanity.

JULIA:

Do you like him?

MAC:

I like him enough to think he has the right to live.

JULIA:

So you'd risk your life for him?

MAC:

It's not much of a risk. The stories that add up from all this adventuring is enough to repay me anyway. If I get caught it wouldn't be the most trouble I've been in with the law.

JULIA:

That will change soon. I've heard stories of hidere getting accidentally shot.

MAC:

People get shot doing anything, even shooting other people. Modern life isn't challenging enough without the repression of the conservatives, so I don't mind one bit. It makes me feel punk rock.

JULIA:

Do you like punk rock?

MAC:

I like the clothing style.

JULIA:

I like the ideas. I listen to it at angst hour.

MAC:

What's angst hour?

JULIA:

For one hour every week I put on lots of dark makeup, read Kierkegaard, and listen to punk rock.

MAC:

Fun.

JULIA:

I have to be sober for it to fully take effect.

MAC:

Like Catharsis?

JULIA:

More like blues, but kind of. How do you know this vampire?

MAC:

I was dared to give him a bit of blood by a friend of mine.

JULIA:

You've given a vampire blood?

MAC:

You've never given blood?

JULIA:

At the blood bank.

MAC:

So have I.

JULIA:

What's getting bit by a vampire like?

MAC:

It's nerve racking at first. It doesn't take much blood for them to turn from a sane and rational person to the demons the right-wing media portrays them to be.

JULIA:

I heard it's fun.

MAC:

Fun like bungee jumping or falling in love; that is to say, not so much fun as an experience. The hypnotism is the hedonism and the bite is the sacrifice. These days most people allow themselves to get bitten much like they'd take a trip to Europe.

JULIA:

I've only been to Romania for a funeral.

MAC:

There is no pain either. When the teeth penetrate it's shocking and lively like cold water hitting your chest on a hot day. It's nice.

JULIA:

Getting bitten is nice?

MAC:

More so than going to the blood bank. Every vampire I met tries to make your donation worthwhile.

JULIA:

Did you hallucinate?

MAC:

As I said there is definitely a hedonistic side to it.

JULIA:

What do you see?

MAC:

He put me into a dream. He took me to the moon and told me he loved me. I could feel the love too. I was like a pendant he wore around his neck. He had complete power over me, but somehow it was the comforting thing I've ever felt in my life.

JULIA:

To be honest that doesn't sound like fun to me.

MAC:

My sense were smothered. I felt like his child and his prey at the same time. It's addicting really. They say when a vampire does kill a person by draining them, the person doesn't resist. There is the release of all your inhibitions as your utmost privacy is invaded all at once. Essentially you're stabbed right in the DNA.

JULIA:

Seems personal.

MAC:

It's not so hard to see why everyone else fell in love.

JULIA:

And you didn't fall in love?

MAC:

I'm not sure I know what love is. I go through the same experiences as everyone else, but I just don't feel good about it.

JULIA:

So you have fallen in love, but you're just not so good at lying to yourself as others?

MAC:

I lie to myself at a normal, healthy rate. I think it's the cynicism.

JULIA:

Maybe it was over-hyped for you.

MAC:

Probably. The only way people get interested in anything is if you over-hype it. Life moves too fast to spend time with things that aren't hyped at least a little bit.

JULIA:

Do you like giving blood to vampires?

MAC:

Whether I like it or not I do it because it's the right thing to do. But yes, I like it.

JULIA:

I don't believe in right or wrong.

MAC:

I believe it's right for the universe. Peace is prosperity.

JULIA:

Peace is repression.

MAC:

I know several people who need a dose of repression.

JULIA:

True, that's even me at times. Do you think there will ever be peace between the vampires and the humans?

MAC:

No. That's why being a rebel is so much fun. You know the burden of responsibility will never be on your shoulders because you'll never have the reins. Although I would like rebelling more if I didn't have to argue as much.

JULIA:

Really? When I first saw you sitting alone in that corner reading I guessed you were the type of person who likes to argue.

MAC:

I like to impress people. Often arguments end up with neither side looking any better.

JULIA:

I can be diplomatic when I care to be. It's only when I don't have the time and energy to impose basic knowledge that I get angst.

MAC:

Being civil is an art.

JULIA:

If I was more of an artist I would be higher up in the food chain. You know I used to date a Crusader way back.

MAC:

A crusader?

JULIA:

Yes, for two years.

MAC:

Two years? What was that like?

JULIA:

I used to be a lot different. I used to care about saving money and working hard.

MAC:

Sounds extreme.

JULIA:

Oh he and I were very extreme, we used to compete over everything.

MAC:

Were you okay with him killing vampires?

JULIA:

At the time, sure. There was a time where everyone around me was. Times change and people do to. Are you going to judge me?

MAC:

Yes, but only a little bit because I had the pleasure of meeting a good one before the peace fad hit the streets.

JULIA:

Tell me. I love hearing stories of how people meet vampires.

MAC:

You've heard a lot of stories from other people who've helped vampires, but you've never been bitten yourself? That's odd.

JULIA:

I've never pursued the opportunity. Tell me the story.

MAC:

I was actually at first approached by a rat.

JULIA:

I heard that was a myth.

MAC:

All the smart vampires communicate through rats. They run through tunnels and burrow places humans can't easily find. The vampire I'm taking you to says they used to communicate to the physical realm through rats back when they were under the earth.

JULIA:

What do the rats sound like?

MAC:

They talk from the inside of your head outward.

JULIA:

Wow.

MAC:

They seem to know you personally but it's all in your head. That's the vampire's charm.

JULIA:

So the rats showed up to your door and tried to solicit blood like some kind of cause?

MAC:

It was much creepier than that, they showed up to my room with gifts.

JULIA:

What did they give you, Cheese? (She laughs)

MAC:

Cocaine.

JULIA (laughs again):

Seriously?

MAC:

Yup. He said he'd been watching me and I'd make an excellent gift for his wife. He said my blood must be strong and vigorous like my writing.

JULIA:

Doesn't sound very charming so far.

MAC:

Yes, it is hard to be charming when speaking through rats. I wasn't scared though.

JULIA:

But you said that he spoke through the rats, yet at the same time the voice was coming from inside your own head?

MAC:

It was like they were emanating some kind of signal. I could tell where it came from, but only a general direction.

JULIA:

I've never heard that before.

MAC:

Like I said, I've been around the vampire scene for a very long time. That's also how I pretty sure you're not a crusader.

JULIA:

I could be.

MAC:

You could be, but you're probably not.

JULIA:

So why would someone as pessimistic in such a dangerous game as you are trust someone as new as me?

MAC:

Even Kierkegaard in his angst had to take a leap of faith at some time, didn't he?

JULIA:

What would your wise and charming vampire say about letting out this information in public?

MAC:

Oh he doesn't care if he lives or dies.

JULIA:

But isn't the whole ideal of the vampires is immortality?

MAC:

It's immortality to we who are mortal. They are animals like us who have a hard time thinking to the future. My vampire can't remember how old it is, or often what day of the week it is. He is a romantic who's concerned on life evolving rather than remaining as it is. Humans have vilified them for this, but really it is only our own politicians who want to impede change.

JULIA:

I have really been hanging out in the wrong circles.

MAC:

See what I told you about friends?

JULIA:

At least my friends only suck the life out of me metaphorically.

MAC:

I only said the vampires were my friends as a general sense. I know all of them but they don't know me.

JULIA:

Are they difficult?

MAC:

Not more than humans. It's like being friends with your ex, not impossible but very difficult. Emotions rise very quickly when every day is a struggle for survival.

JULIA:

So you pity them?

MAC:

I'm fascinated by them and I don't want them to be killed in the streets.

JULIA:

What about rats?

MAC:

What?

JULIA:

Do you think rats should be killed in the streets?

MAC:

Only for sport, not food.

JULIA:

That's horrible.

MAC:

I'm joking.

JULIA:

Let's go, the wind has picked up and I need to move.

CURTAIN

Act 5

Scene 1

(Scene: The Basement as it was last, only this time CORNELIUS looks much older. His hair is white and his skin is sallow. There is a pile of cigarette butts in an ashtray before him and the bottle of scotch is a quarter empty.)

At Rise: LUCILE and SANDRA enter, SANDRA is dressed all in black.)

LUCILE:

CORNELIUS? I better not be smelling cigarette smoke.

(LUCILE and SANDRA arrive down the stairs.)

LUCILE:

Oh my God, you stupid idiot.
(SANDRA laughs)
Have you been smoking?

CORNELIUS:

Hello SANDRA.

SANDRA:

Hello Old Man.

LUCILE:

Where were you hiding that whisky?

CORNELIUS:

It's scotch.

LUCILE:

You're not supposed to drink alcohol, it will kill you.

CORNELIUS:

It will kill you too.

LUCILE:

Should I bring you garlic?

CORNELIUS:

No. The reason I'm drinking this is because it tastes like music. Garlic tastes too much like garlic.

LUCILE:

How did you even smuggle all that stuff here?

CORNELIUS:

The rats.

LUCILE:

(slowly approaches)
Give me those cigarettes.

CORNELIUS:

Take them from me.

LUCILE:

I'm trying to help you.

CORNELIUS:

Then take them from me.

(LUCILE moves to the table but CORNELIUS draws out a switchblade. LUCILE moves back.)

CORNELIUS:

I never said I wouldn't kill you if you tried.

SANDRA:

Put down the knife, CORNELIUS.

CORNELIUS:

You remember this knife SANDRA? This knife was made for me in the 90's by a fan of mine from California. It has a silver tip and has killed 20 vampires, one of whom was the one who turned SANDRA.

LUCILE:

(looks at SANDRA)
I told you it was bad.

CORNELIUS:

(playing with the knife)
He told me if I didn't stay away from SANDRA he'd torture me for days in that dungeon he and his brother built. I killed him before the period at the end of his sentence.

SANDRA:

(still watching CORNELIUS)
He throws fits all the time, he'll be fine.

CORNELIUS:

Fine as cherry wine.

SANDRA:

Stop scaring her, she's only been good to you.

CORNELIUS:

Good and bad are arbitrary. She's been nice to me, and therefore made me weak.

SANDRA:

It's what you wanted.

CORNELIUS:

I'm the last person to trust what I want.

LUCILE:

Then trust me, CORNELIUS.

CORNELIUS:

Leave, Christine.

SANDRA:

You've lost your mind for real this time. I haven't seen you at this DEFCON of crazy ever.

CORNELIUS:

I knew a vampire who experimented by exposing himself to small doses of sunlight while trying to invent a cure. He went crazy and I put him down because I felt pity. Do you feel pity for me?

SANDRA:

You've led a very prosperous life. I feel pity for your current state though. Do you want me to end it slowly so you get one last reflection on your life after your pride is broken by my superior strength?

CORNELIUS:

I told you SANDRA was vicious? People can't help feeling passionately one way or the other whenever she's in a room. Let us kill each other, it's what romantics do.

LUCILE (to SANDRA):

You said you would help him.

SANDRA:

Yes, but our definition of help is different.

LUCILE:

I'm not ready for him to die.

SANDRA:

Why not? Look at the helpless old fool. I would have shot him already if he posed a threat.

CORNELIUS:

You don't own a gun with silver bullets.

SANDRA:

(pulls out a revolver with her right hand, holding it in their general direction but not looking down the sights)

You're wrong. I killed a crusader and took this. You said I would never be strong enough to kill a crusader if I kept hanging around you.

CORNELIUS:

That's why I haven't seen you very long. You've become an animal. You're no one's bride now.

SANDRA:

Don't complain. You were annoyed with me the last few years we were together.

CORNELIUS:

But you lived to annoy me. You tried to get me to do something with my life.

SANDRA:

All I was trying to get you to do was something you were better at than me: being a vampire.

CORNELIUS:

Now you know I'd literally rather die.

SANDRA:

So let me shred you. I've been waiting to shred you for so long.

(LUCILE fumbles in her pocket for a bit before pulling out a cross and holding it in SANDRA's direction.)

LUCILE:

Stop!

SANDRA:

I can also shred your little groupie too if you're too lazy to do it. You know they get their own ideas after a while of serving. You can't fault them for it, it's built into their DNA.

CORNELIUS:

Leave the barmaid out of this, she's only trying to break up a brawl between drunkards like us.

SANDRA:

I could kill her with a paint chip, why does she matter so much?

CORNELIUS:

I like her.

SANDRA:

She's weak.

CORNELIUS:

You're blind to her strengths, like art and calculus.

SANDRA:

Those are only strengths in her world. Why don't I drain her and set her free?

CORNELIUS:

(picks up one of the flintlocks on the desk)
Because then I'd shoot you.

SANDRA:

Are we role-playing now? So soon before we've even caught up?

LUCILE:

CORNELIUS! Put that down!

(CORNELIUS lowers his arm but keeps his hand clutching the handle.)

SANDRA:

Do you want to know if I've been someone else's target practice other than your own lately?

CORNELIUS:

I'm over knowing things, I want to die.

SANDRA:

According to other vampires, you don't die. Being eaten by the void means being reborn.

CORNELIUS:

Too bad, the humans die and I will too. They'll see my bones rotting from my flesh and they'll say, "He's dead." Humans are like that.

SANDRA:

Why do you want to die, CORNELIUS?

CORNELIUS:

Because I'm sick of people like you always asking me why I want to die.

SANDRA:

I've never asked you that in my life

CORNELIUS:

Not in those words, true. With you it's always, "What's wrong?" or, "Are you okay?"

SANDRA:

I'm trying to help you.

CORNELIUS:

Nobody needs your help. Either come fight me or help me finish this bottle.

SANDRA:

You think I want to fight you? I could squish you between my forefinger and thumb. You haven't been worthy of a fight in a long time. Why do you think it's been so long since I've seen you?

CORNELIUS:

You're right, I've spent too much of my life fighting with you. Let's shoot each other.

SANDRA:

You have one shot. Calm down and have some of this disciple. I think she'd really give her life for you.

LUCILE:

He's sick. There's something wrong with his voice.

SANDRA:

Yes, it speaks his words.

LUCILE:

He helped you.

SANDRA:

In my young years, yes. But men are like revolutions dear, they die from within and become a dark parody of the thing they fought against. Remember how he used to be so full of life? He was as young and full of life as every other of my husbands. Then they get old and start sacrificing things to the darkness itself. It's nature's call to put them down. See, dear, the CORNELIUS we both fell in love with is dead. He doesn't talk with rats. That was a myth invented by ancient ones like himself. He's bored of everything life has to offer.

CORNELIUS:

Except talking with rats.

SANDRA:

So bring some rats here now and talk to them.

CORNELIUS:

I don't want to.

SANDRA:

Why not?

CORNELIUS:

They're shy.

SANDRA:

(to LUCILE)

In seventy five years he has never shown me how he talks to rats.

CORNELIUS:

Has it been that long already?

SANDRA:

See? He doesn't remember how long we've been married. He's sick. Don't they put down sick humans?

LUCILE:

Why is he sick?

SANDRA:

It's the humans fault. Progression of a whole requires subservience of the individual. Their blood is weak. I can't blame them. I hate them but I can't blame them for wanting to make life easier for everyone.

LUCILE:

I'm a human and I'm like that.

SANDRA:

Don't you know that wasn't a compliment?

LUCILE:

I knew that wasn't how you meant it.

SANDRA:

Something in you humans' blood tastes funny these days. Everyone is more aware and less afraid. I can go whole months without being sexually harassed and when I drive like an idiot people rarely honk their horns at me anymore. Some countries have even provided a safe haven for vampires. Their blood is so weak I guess I can't blame CORNELIUS for going crazy either. I stop talking to him when he started showing their characteristics.

CORNELIUS:

I heard that.

SANDRA:

Of course you heard that. The only reason I haven't killed you yet is because I've invested so much time in you. Come eat this human with me.

(LUCILE raises her cross again.)

CORNELIUS:

I value the humans too much to eat them now.

SANDRA:

They're emotionally dependant on you, how can you love them?

CORNELIUS:

I love the God of the Christians. In the Old Testament he killed the people he hated, in the New Testament he killed the people he loved, and now he kills everyone regardless.

SANDRA:

Do you think that making it impossible to talk with you is going to make me leave her alone?

LUCILE:

He warned me not to call you.

SANDRA:

You did the right thing, girl. I'm the one you should be worshipping. You're deluded but strong, just the kind of infantry I need for my army. I like you because you're dumb. Being dumb fills a human's role. You herd together as your nature dictates and I can't blame you for that. At least, I won't blame you if you're part of my herd. You'd defend a wet rag if you could associate it with some vague ideal. CORNELIUS liked you because he had such an easy time playing with your head.

CORNELIUS:

That's not true, Christine. We both know I had an addiction to your French onion soup.

LUCILE:

He's right.

SANDRA:

He's insane.

LUCILE:

But I did make a very good French onion soup.

SANDRA:

Both of you are being a ridiculous waste of time. I could be out there winning a war and having fun.

CORNELIUS:

You think your happiness is more important than evolution, but what you call happiness is just lights going off in your brain.

SANDRA:

All you call evolution is only happiness being stifled.

LUCILE:

Go away, SANDRA.

SANDRA:

Sure I'll go. I would only kill you if I was afraid of you.

CORNELIUS:

You once told me you were a vampire because you were a romantic.

SANDRA:

You really got old too fast. Seeing this shell makes me miss the old CORNELIUS even more.

CORNELIUS:

I was never the old CORNELIUS, but I played him very well.

SANDRA:

I'm leaving.

CORNELIUS:

Before you go, give me something to remember you by.

SANDRA:

I don't even want to look at you, why would I want to touch you?

CORNELIUS:

Remember how we used to duel? We used to shoot each other every day at dawn to feel how powerful we were.

SANDRA:

We only did that a few times.

CORNELIUS:

Look what I have? Let's shoot each other one final time. I've loaded our pistols.

SANDRA:

I don't feel like getting shot.

CORNELIUS:

Do it for me. Let your last memory of me be a warring one, for your sake.

SANDRA:

Just shoot yourself. You used to love shooting yourself.

CORNELIUS:

It's not the same. Don't you miss the old me?

SANDRA:

You're right, let's shoot each other one final time.

LUCILE:

Don't kill him, I beg you. He can still be useful to you.

SANDRA:

I'm not going to kill him, I told you that.

LUCILE:

He saved you once.

SANDRA:

He would have killed those crusaders for anyone. I won't shoot him with silver though. We used to shoot each other with lead as a symbol of our own power.

CORNELIUS:

We were celebrating privilege, not power.

SANDRA:

You do realize when we shoot our guns down here someone will call the cops?

CORNELIUS:

Gunshots go off in this neighborhood all the time, they can't come in here without a warrant.

SANDRA:

Why do you even want to revive what we had in the past? The last time I even thought about our little ritual was years ago.

CORNELIUS:

I want to feel pain because I want to feel God.

SANDRA:

What?

CORNELIUS:

It's the same reason I'm dying, I want to feel God. I want to torture myself as a burnt offering to the universe. I'm becoming a Christian.

SANDRA:

Impossible.

CORNELIUS:

In their book it says "Our God is a consuming fire." I want to be part of that, even if it's for one moment in a blaze.

LUCILE:

Just leave, SANDRA. You shouldn't see him like this.

SANDRA:

I'm the only one who should see him like this. I must be the only person on earth that doesn't feel either one way or the other about him.

CORNELIUS:

Did you know Jesus loves me?

LUCILE:

Don't talk about God around her.

CORNELIUS:

Nietzsche was right, God is dead, but he digests in our stomachs.

SANDRA:

Give me that pistol.

LUCILE:

Please, even if you shoot him with lead he might not recover.

SANDRA:

Shut up. It's not entertaining anymore.

CORNELIUS:

Get out of here, Christine. Your mother and I are going to shoot each other.

LUCILE:

He's drunk. Just laugh it off and walk away. That's why people like you, you laugh things off.

SANDRA:

People don't like me, they either adore me or hate me.

CORNELIUS:

Jesus loves you, SANDRA.

SANDRA:

Don't say that name.

CORNELIUS:

Why not? It's the only thing that's fun to dabble in anymore, everything else is too easy these days.

SANDRA:

Give me that pistol.

(Walks forward but LUCILE stands in her way and holds up her cross. SANDRA steps back and hisses.)

CORNELIUS:

Get out of here Christine, this is how adults play.

LUCILE:

I won't let her-

(SANDRA lifts the revolver in her hand)

CORNELIUS:

SANDRA no!

LUCILE:

Go ahead, what do I have to live for?

SANDRA:

Move.

LUCILE:

Don't kill him.

SANDRA:

The only reason I haven't killed you both yet is out of pity.

CORNELIUS:

Christine, look at me. Listen to bass in my voice. Your bills are piling up.

LUCILE:

Stop that.

CORNELIUS:

Your room is a mess and that paper is due. You were supposed to clean your birdcage and your mother thinks you're dead because she hasn't heard from you in two months. When's the last time you changed the oil of your car? It probably hates you. Your birds

hate you too because their living in their own shit. Everyone hates you.

LUCILE (weaker):

I said stop that. I know what-

CORNELIUS:

There's too much for one little girl. You're just a small squishy thing that's being squeezed by the big world until you pop. It's not fair.

LUCILE:

Stop it.

CORNELIUS:

You're brain needs to shut down from the overload. Everything needs to shut down. Modern life is too hard.

LUCILE:

(slowly)
Modern life is too hard.

CORNELIUS:

Everything is moving like molasses through frozen pipes.

LUCILE:

Modern life-

CORNELIUS:

The world around in swirling in a vortex and all the matter around is blending together.
(LUCILE drops her cross and covers her ears.)

LUCILE:

Blending to-
(shakes her head and covers her ears)
Get out of-

CORNELIUS:

It's too big of a whirlpool for one little squishy person to handle. You're getting swept up in it. It's best to give in.

LUCILE:

I can't-

CORNELIUS:

It's impossible not to give in when everything is moving so fast. It's impossible to notice every detail. You're supposed to give in. Everything is turning into light more and more.

It's catching white fire all around you. It's bright and it's a circle.

LUCILE:

(dreamily)
It's big.

CORNELIUS:

It's hungry.

LUCILE:

(afraid)
So hungry.

CORNELIUS:

You know why it's hungry don't you? Eh? Because, it's the moon, Christine, the moon wants to eat you.

LUCILE:

(slumps to the floor)
Oh God.

CORNELIUS:

You can't fight it. The teeth are bigger than buildings.

LUCILE:

CORNELIUS... save me...

CORNELIUS:

Now you're all swallowed up but it's nice here in the dark. It's good to not have to think about all that modern life going on around you. It's warm and things are getting warmer.

LUCILE:

It's hot.

CORNELIUS:

But it's nice. Big nice warm teeth. You thought they were going to hurt but they didn't. Giving up is better than it sounds. Why don't you stay down there a little while it's warm?

LUCILE:

Warm.

CORNELIUS:

It's hot. Why don't you bathe in it?

LUCILE (smiles):

Bathe.

CORNELIUS:

I think everything will be fine wrapped up in that fire. It's certainly more comfortable than any boyfriend you've had.

LUCILE:

Comfortable.

CORNELIUS:

Go to sleep and wake up in two hours.

(LUCILE slumps forward on the floor)

SANDRA:

She was always good for you.

CORNELIUS:

She liked me.

SANDRA:

She liked you because talking to you is like shouting into the wind. She could have said anything and it would be lost in a sweeping wave of romanticism.

CORNELIUS:

Are you going to shoot me with that or can I have another cigarette?

SANDRA:

Smoke another 50, what do I care?

(She points the gun at the ground and un-cocks it, then puts it in her pocket.)

CORNELIUS:

You just said we're only alive because you pity us.

SANDRA:

Don't you know about fear tactics? I didn't want such a cute innocent thing being scarred by what I'm going to do to your body once you're dead.

CORNELIUS:

Make me twerk?

SANDRA:

You're CORNELIUS the Spiteful. I can probably auction off each one of your teeth for a few million dollars, probably a billion for your head.

CORNELIUS:

You want her for your own disciple don't you?

SANDRA:

That little lamb?
(She laughs)

CORNELIUS:

That little lamb bites harder than you think.

SANDRA:

You don't even know who she is anymore. You keep calling her Christine.

CORNELIUS:

There are so many lambs that bite these days it's hard to keep track of them. Jesus cares for the lambs, sometimes you just got to trust him.

SANDRA:

Slide that pistol across the floor to me.

(CORNELIUS slides the pistol halfway across the floor. SANDRA walks over, picks it up, and goes back to her spot while examining it.)

SANDRA:

Did you put powder in?

CORNELIUS:

Yes, I put the powder in.

SANDRA:

You always insisted on loading them.

CORNELIUS:

There is a particular way to load them. I told you about it.

SANDRA:

Shall we stand back to back and shoot after twenty paces?

CORNELIUS:

No.

(He slowly stands up and walks close to her, one painful step at a time.)

SANDRA:

Look at how close you are? I could hit you if I was on a carousel.

CORNELIUS:

Who cares? I want to feel the explosion rippling through my ribs.)

SANDRA:

You're right, who cares?

(She raises her pistol and fires. It explodes in her hand. She screams while clutching the bloody stump where her right hand used to be. Cornelius laughs, drops his gun, and pulls out the switchblade.)

CORNELIUS:

Don't complain, you deserved that one. Didn't I always tell you to make sure there wasn't too much primer otherwise it would explode in your hand?

(SANDRA reaches in her pocket for her pistol but CORNELIUS falls on her and stabs her again and again with his silver switchblade. She screams until he stabs her in the throat. She struggles for a moment more, then is still. CORNELIUS stands up, breathing heavily.)

CORNELIUS:

That was more exhausting than I hoped. But you were always more work than I planned for.

(CORNELIUS kicks SANDRA's dead body and stabs her a few more times. He stands up and finishes catching his breath, then wipes the blade on her coat and stuffs it in his pocket. Soon he walks back to the poker table.)

Easiest break-up ever.

(He lights a cigarette and pours himself another drink.)

I can't believe it's been 75 years already.

(There is a knock on the door.)

(CORNELIUS tries to shout)

COME IN!!

(Rubs his throat)

God that hurts.

(MAC enters the room with JULIA.)

MAC:

Do I really smell smoke down here? Did LUCILE smoke down here to tease you?

(MAC and JULIA arrive downstairs. MAC puts his hand over his mouth.)

JULIA:

Oh Jesus.

CORNELIUS:

He didn't do it.

MAC:

Is that SANDRA?

CORNELIUS:

In flesh and oozing blood.

MAC:

Why did you kill her?

(CORNELIUS blows out a puff of smoke.)

CORNELIUS answer me. We heard gunshots from outside. The cops could be here any moment. Did she try to kill you?

JULIA:

That's a lot of blood.

MAC:

You can go if you want.

JULIA:

I don't want to go, I don't care about cops.

CORNELIUS:

No cops are coming. Gunshots go off in this neighborhood all the time.

MAC:

Is LUCILE dead?

CORNELIUS:

She's hypnotized.

(CORNELIUS drinks, puffs on his cigarette, and breaks out in a spell of coughing.)

MAC:

Are you okay?

CORNELIUS:

I'm dying, so for once, yes.

MAC:

Are you drunk?

CORNELIUS:

Also yes. I've never found a cause worth dying for except this scotch.
(CORNELIUS takes a drink.)

MAC:

What are you doing? Are you trying to kill yourself?

CORNELIUS:

I've decided I want to get swallowed by the darkness.

MAC:

I heard that was a myth.

CORNELIUS:

We wanted it to be a myth. We were having so much fun doing whatever we wanted that it was impossible not to lie to ourselves. Not with people as proud as us.

MAC:

I used to have a very deep attachment to SANDRA.

CORNELIUS:

I know. I wish it didn't have to be so bloody.

MAC:

I hate seeing you like this too.

CORNELIUS:

All good things come to an end. Vampires were never meant to have eternal life. We were supposed to learn all we could and break apart into new small pieces that would go on living. We pulled ourselves up from the abyss to be plants, not weeds. When the darkness swallows a vampire, it breaks apart into all the pieces it can. For Mother Nature it's like taking a pee after a long time of holding it in.

JULIA:

Is the other one going to be okay?

CORNELIUS:

She'll be fine.

MAC:

Fine according to you, or fine according to me?

CORNELIUS:

Fine according to the sweet cherry wine.

JULIA:

(to MAC)
Is this the vampire?

MAC:

(steps back)

This was the vampire at some point. I'm not sure who this is anymore.

CORNELIUS:

You don't understand, I'll be fine too.

MAC:

I'm sure.

(He rolls up his sleeve)

Have some of my blood.

CORNELIUS:

No, no blood for me. I've had my share.

MAC:

CORNELIUS, listen to me. You seem to be suffering from mild dementia-

CORNELIUS:

Since when do I listen? You're not even a doctor.

MAC:

I've seen it before.

CORNELIUS:

So have I, but I never knew what fun it was.

MAC:

The vampire's I've seen it with died.

CORNELIUS:

Were they buried like Wu-Tang Clan buried the English language?

MAC:

Okay CORNELIUS, you win.

CORNELIUS:

Oh God.

MAC:

Whatever game you're playing, you win.

CORNELIUS:

You and Christine both.

MAC:

Who's Christine?

CORNELIUS:

Never mind, who are you?

MAC:

Look around you, CORNELIUS. You hypnotized Lucy against her will and killed your wife. We're just trying to gain some political momentum after years of violence. Do you know what the newspapers are going to say about vampires now?

CORNELIUS:

Yes, the rats will tell me.

MAC:

It is like you to act out, but never this violently.

CORNELIUS:

I thought about it a long time. There was one time during World War 2 that I hid with her in an attic for two days. I thought about killing her then.

MAC:

What took you so long?

CORNELIUS:

She never believed in the darkness.

MAC:

I don't know anything either. I've heard rumours.

CORNELIUS:

What rumours?

MAC:

They were mostly from you and Lord Silverwood.

CORNELIUS:

Did I?

MAC:

You said it was a cycle of some kind and he said it's what Satan worships.

CORNELIUS:

That does sound like something we would say. Though to fair neither of us know what it is.

MAC:

So why did you kill your wife?

CORNELIUS:

Because Jesus was kind enough to send Legion into those pigs.

MAC:

I never read the Bible.

CORNELIUS:

He saw there were too many spirits congesting that boy, poisoning him. Jesus sent him into the pigs and the pigs ran over the side of the cliff to die because Legion was too big for even them. Sandra was too congested, like me. We need to be spread out so the earth can digest us properly.

MAC:

So you killed her?

CORNELIUS:

Yes. I didn't drink her blood either. I will her body sit there and let all the crawling and buzzing things have her. I will not be going to them though, I will be going to the rats.

MAC:

I've never seen these rats you mention.

CORNELIUS:

Whenever I was in somewhere warm I always communicated through the lizards. Most people would think I would use the snake, but snakes are too slow. I'm happy the rats are going to eat me though, they are vicious and it will be quick. We were taught that the darkness would be painless when we were young, but I suspected even then that was a sugar coat.

MAC:

I'm not sure what to do about you though.

CORNELIUS:

I made the less controversial choice. How many did I save by killing her?

MAC:

Since when do you care about saving people?

CORNELIUS:

Since it gives me the green light to drink scotch.
(He drinks.)

MAC:

Stop that.

CORNELIUS:

Why? Come have a drink with me.

MAC:

I won't enable your delusion.

JULIA:

I'll have a drink.

(She sits across the table.)

CORNELIUS:

I've only got one glass.

JULIA:

I used to drink from the bottle when I was a teenager. What's the occasion?

CORNELIUS:

The occasion is I have run into an 18 year old scotch.

JULIA:

It's been awhile since I drank to that.

CORNELIUS:

Would you like a cigarette?

JULIA:

I'd take anything to distract me from the awkwardness of this setting.

(CORNELIUS offers JULIA a cigarette and she accepts. MAC kneels by SANDRA and inspects her. CORNELIUS lights JULIA's cigarette.)

CORNELIUS:

You know the police could be here any minute.

JULIA:

You said they won't be here.

CORNELIUS:

It's only a guess. You're risking a young night out on the town by trusting me.

JULIA:

It's a risk to trust anyone.

CORNELIUS:

I just murdered my wife.

JULIA:

I never doubted you were the murdering type.

CORNELIUS:

Then why are you here?

JULIA:

I guess I don't care too much about my life either.

(JULIA raises her bottle and CORNELIUS raises his glass, they drink.)

CORNELIUS:

Is this even fun for you?

JULIA:

I got nothing better going on. This doesn't look like it's very fun for you either.

CORNELIUS:

Surviving is no fun. Letting go is the most fun I've ever had.

(MAC stands up.)

MAC:

I think you killed her out of spite.

CORNELIUS:

What makes you say that?

(coughs)

MAC:

(shrugs)

It looks like a spiteful killing.

CORNELIUS:

Are you an expert?

MAC:

No, but I've seen a lot of spiteful killings and they all had that many stab wounds.

CORNELIUS:

I do remember you mentioning it, and it's true that I stabbed her many times. I maybe didn't need to stab her that many times, but I like to be sure.

JULIA:

I can tell you're a liar.

CORNELIUS:

I am a liar.

JULIA:

The worst kind of liar, a charming one.

CORNELIUS:

I am the worst. I should just die right?

JULIA:

I deserve to die too.

CORNELIUS:

Have you done something bad?

JULIA:

Who knows?

CORNELIUS:

How do you feel sitting across from a lying killer?

JULIA:

More sober than when I entered. I plan on a change of perspective.

CORNELIUS:

She a lively one, MAC.

MAC:

Are you going to try to suck her blood?

CORNELIUS:

Isn't that's why you bring me these women?

MAC:

That's when I thought you were one of the good ones.

CORNELIUS:

(drinks)

There was a time where I thought I was one of the good ones too.

(Picks up something off the table)

Look, my hair is falling out.

MAC:

Killing yourself is no way to atone.

CORNELIUS:

I'm not killing myself. I'm donating myself to a better cause.

MAC:

I don't know what to make of all of this.

CORNELIUS:

That was how I turned from a spirit to a vampire as well, a man didn't know what to make of things. He had so many different ideals as well and he didn't know which one to choose. With each day that passed he was torn between religions and moral codes. He needed to drain his thoughts without spilling his brains, because he, like me, he was too big of a coward to kill himself.

MAC:

And back would have been too old for guns.

CORNELIUS:

You're right, as always. Sit and drink with us.

MAC:

(sits at a chair)

I guess I have no other choice at this point.

(JULIA takes a swig from the bottle and passes it to MAC who also drinks.)

CORNELIUS:

Have a cigarette.

MAC:

I don't smoke anymore.

CORNELIUS:

No, you don't smoke around me. I can taste it in your blood.

MAC:

Why would I not smoke around you?

CORNELIUS:

You knew it would kill me and you didn't make me want to feel jealous.

MAC:

This time you're wrong.

CORNELIUS:

I'm rarely wrong when it comes to blood.

MAC:

Well this is one of those times.

CORNELIUS:

If it doesn't I'll be very angry with you for not sharing my final pack of smokes with me. I-
(He pauses to fold into a spell of hacking.)

JULIA:

Take it easy, man.

CORNELIUS:

(shakes his head)
That's not the point of this exercise.

MAC:

Is it happening?
(CORNELIUS nods.)
Are you sure you want this?

CORNELIUS:

Is everyone so insistent on asking the same stupid question?

MAC:

The people who love you, yes.

CORNELIUS:

If that's the people who love me I can't wait to die soon.
(He begins to cough violently again.)
Bring me to my coffin. I need to die in my coffin with the lid on.
(JULIA and MAC struggle to drag CORNELIUS to his coffin. Once he is safely inside he leans against the back of it.)

CORNELIUS:

It's been over two weeks since I've had any blood. I miss the smell of freshly spilt blood. I miss when you can drink as much as you want because it's from a person who is dead.

MAC:

It's not too late.

CORNELIUS:

(coughs)
Sure, sure. Put the lid on the coffin.

MAC:

Why?

CORNELIUS:

It makes it easier for the darkness. Sometimes the darkness needs a little helpful nudge in the right direction.

MAC:

This is so weird.

CORNELIUS:

Right? Can you really blame me for not doing it all these years?
(CORNELIUS erupts into hacking again.)

JULIA:

I can't believe this is my first meeting with a vampire. I heard it was supposed to be easier going.

CORNELIUS:

Chill gets tiring after a while. I've been chill for millennia, I want to be CORNELIUS.

JULIA:

I guess there should be one day where everyone gets to be themselves.

MAC:

(picks up the lid)
Goodbye CORNELIUS.

JULIA:

Goodbye CORNELIUS.
(CORNELIUS coughs again and MAC closes the lid over the coffin. They wait for a few seconds then the coffin begins to rattle and CORNELIUS shrieks. JULIA and MAC take a step back.)

MAC:

Are you alright? I'm taking the lid off.

CORNELIUS:

(screaming)
DON'T TAKE THE LID OFF!

JULIA:

Are you alright?

CORNELIUS:

I deserve it.
(there's a knock on the door.)

MAC:

What's going on?

JULIA:

Let us help you.
(silence.)

MAC:

CORNELIUS? ... CORNELIUS?
(Still nothing from CORNELIUS.)

JULIA:

Open the coffin.

MAC:

I'm not opening the coffin. You open the coffin.

JULIA:

It'd be rude for me to do it.

MAC:

Why?

JULIA:

I'm a stranger, it would be weird.

MAC:

I don't want to.

JULIA:

I don't want either, but someone has to do it.
(There is a knocking from the entrance door.)

Muffled voice:

Police, open up.

JULIA:

Never mind them, open the coffin.

MAC:

Fine, okay.

(MAC steps over to the coffin and opens it, they both stare for a moment before MAC slams the lid shut.)

JULIA:

Oh my God.

Did you see that?

MAC:

Where did those rats come from?

JULIA:

I only saw a little blood in there, they must have picked him clean.

MAC:

That's insane.

JULIA:

There were no rats when I first opened it, that's for sure.
(More knocks from upstairs.)

MAC:

This is the police. We will break this door down.

Muffled voice:

I wonder what happened.

JULIA:

(sounding like a hundred voices)
Evolution.

CORNELIUS:

CURTAIN

END