

# **LEMURIA**

by Bonnie Antosh  
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## CHARACTERS

REAGAN	she	Co-Associate Director mid 30s, Black, raised in Charleston, SC
MIRIAM	she	Co-Associate Director mid 30s, Sephardic raised in Mexico City
ANABELLE	she	Director 60s, White raised in Asheville, NC
M	they	PhD Candidate late 20s, any ethnicity raised all over Appalachia
SEBASTIAN	he	Intern 18, Asian American, Latinx, Native, or Middle Eastern raised in Smithfield, NC
NINA	she	Director of Behavior early 30s, any ethnicity raised in Durham, NC
—		
CORDELIA	she	Ring-tailed lemur 27 raised in Durham, NC *doubles with Nina
ROOMMATE	she/they	Just a voice 19 raised in Norwalk, CT *doubles with M

## SETTING

A full academic year: September 1 - May 1  
A major research university in Eastern North Carolina  
2018, or thereabouts — not a time of Quarantine

## **A FEW NOTES**

A midline double slash (//) indicates overlapping dialogue.

A double slash at the end of the line (//) indicates no pause between speakers.

A dash (—) indicates a suspension, a pause, or the decision not to finish a thought.

*For beats of silence:*

Hot versus cool indicates tension or ease. Minute versus second indicates duration.

## **ON ACCENTS**

Almost every character would hesitate before answering the question

“Where are you from?”

Characters’ accents should shift internally & organically  
as they age,  
as they react to emotion,  
as they code-switch,  
and whenever they drink.

## **ON CORDELIA**

As I imagine her, Cordelia is embodied as an extraordinary, intricate puppet.  
She’s voiced and operated by the actor who plays Nina.

In spirit, Cordelia is extremely Camp.

In form, she is not Camp.

## **WITH GRATITUDE**

Dr. Andrea Baden

Chloe Chen-Kraus

Meg Dye

Dr. Eric Sargis

Raymond Vagell

Duke Lemur Center

+ Others Generous Sources

## **PROLOGUE**

*Before the play starts — the warm sounds of a Carolina forest.  
Cicadas. Crickets. The rustle of trees about to start letting their leaves down.*

*Eventually, the sounds move into thick, complete darkness  
Or perhaps the most intricate projections.  
One or the other.*

*A gentle hum. Then, a regal, husky voice,  
like a Chain-Smoking Julie Andrews:*

### **A MYSTERIOUS VOICE**

Dear Death,

I am interrupting my normal mantra today because I feel you are growing closer, and

No matter how many healthy offspring I leave with habitat  
With little ones and little-littles of their own  
With enough stored fat to survive years of famine  
And enough cunning to outwit the wild fossa

I still feel we have a certain amount of unfinished business to address, between ourselves.

A monarch must live to serve her subjects,  
so it is right my flesh should serve the richness of the ground

A monarch must reign with absolute discernment, and she must not falter,  
so it is right that the wisdom of my foremothers shall pass onward  
to a mind that is nimble and fresh.

But Death, in exchange for my civility, you must take me all at once.  
You must be synchronized and swift.  
It is not fitting for my subjects to behold this queenly form devoid of its queenly bearing.

I shall beg of no-one  
Not even you  
But I ask in all humbleness

If the day comes when I can no longer recognize my hand as hand  
This forest as forest  
Nor Craisin as Craisin  
You must finish the job.  
You have an open invitation.

Whatever you do, don't let my mind die faster than my body.  
In Craisin's name, Amen.

*A lemur screech!*

## 1. SEPTEMBER

*Eastern North Carolina. A college campus.  
Outside a building made of glass and wood.*

*A sign reads LEMURLAB ENTRANCE.  
Multiple banners hang around the entrance:*

*BACK TO SCHOOL WITH THE LEMUR YEARBOOK!*

*AYE-AYE: MOST INTELLECTUAL  
RED RUFFED LEMUR: MOST STYLISH  
SIFAKA: HARDEST TO PRONOUNCE  
RING-TAILED LEMUR: CLASS CLOWN*

*There's a long, skinny bench on rockers: a juggling board.  
NINA is standing on top of the juggling board, trying to adjust one of the banners.  
REAGAN enters. She watches for a minute.*

REAGAN  
I know a guy who fell off a roof doing that.

NINA  
Educational Outreach?

REAGAN  
Banners.

NINA  
Friend of yours?

REAGAN  
Football banners.

NINA  
Ah.

REAGAN  
For Carolina.

NINA  
Even worse.

REAGAN  
"Let's Go Cocks!"

NINA  
That's when you knew: only the fit survive.

*A cool second.*

NINA (*cont'd*)  
So.

REAGAN  
So.

NINA  
Weird morning.

REAGAN  
Hm.

*REAGAN holds the juggling board steady for NINA.*

NINA  
You don't think I'm fit?

REAGAN  
Your safety means nothing to me.  
As Associate Director, I'm contractually obligated to limit our liability

NINA  
*Co-Associate Director //*

REAGAN  
Fine girl, fall!

NINA  
If I bust my ass on this juggling board //

REAGAN  
"Nina Workman, 31, gave her life for the conservation of lemurs. She almost escaped to the private sector" //

NINA  
"But nonprofit primate research got her in the end."

*The banner is falling. NINA scrambles to grab it.*

REAGAN  
You missed us.

NINA  
Bless.

REAGAN  
You can admit it.

NINA

—

So.

REAGAN

So.

NINA

Weird morning.

REAGAN

You said.

NINA

Assuming you've — heard from Anabelle?

REAGAN

Bring the corner down.

NINA

Have you? Ray?

*A hot second.*

REAGAN

Her phone's been off since the gala.

NINA

Has Meer heard from her?

REAGAN

You'd know better than // me.

NINA

Why would Anabelle want to leave? She's only what mid-sixties?

REAGAN

66.

NINA

She has tenure. She's a legend.

REAGAN

She hates when you say // that.

NINA

Sorry not sorry. I can't imagine her square dancing through retirement or I don't know fostering geriatric poodles can you?

REAGAN

She doesn't rush on big decisions.

NINA

Not like she has grandkids to, sorry that's mean that's really — sorry  
It's not about the conference, right? With her calling that moderator // a

REAGAN

Compared to last year? When he asked about Women in STEM?

NINA

But this went viral.

REAGAN

No way.

NINA

Well how much of a heads up did she give you? Three months?

A month?

—

No.

NINA

I'm sure //

NINA

She hadn't told you?

REAGAN

She's seemed a little off.

NINA

Is she sick?

REAGAN

She's been asking some weird questions.

NINA

"What's your five year plan?" questions or //

REAGAN

Stop.

NINA

"What's your ten year plan?"

REAGAN

She's seemed — distracted. What?

NINA  
Nothing.

REAGAN  
What?

NINA  
Are you gonna be The Boss next year?

REAGAN  
I don't wanna talk about this.

*NINA doesn't say anything, but she calls bullshit.*

REAGAN (*cont'd*)  
They'll do a national search.

NINA  
Right, so we'll get a Prof Parade flying down here from IvyLand or wherever before Anabelle — Sorry, "the Hiring Committee" — appoints you as Interim Director. Which, I'm gonna roll my eyes a lot, but in my heart, y'know, secretly love. And then //

*MIRIAM enters, screaming into her phone. Without breaking stride:*

MIRIAM  
Once again, Dr. Stausenberg, there was no conspiracy to keep the Board in the dark! Not a single soul on the staff was aware of — you have a hard time believing that? Well suspend your disbelief. — No, no *you* seem to have dozed off and missed the last half of this call!

*MIRIAM stomps into the building and exits.*

REAGAN  
Maybe hiring won't go like that.

NINA  
Maybe Miriam will be my boss.

REAGAN  
Not like she's busy publishing.

NINA  
Ray, how's this gonna work for y'all?

REAGAN  
I need to go.

NINA  
Ok // but

REAGAN

The ring-tails get breakfast at 9:30.

NINA

Why are you covering a feeding?

REAGAN

I'm tracking feeding priority!

NINA

Today? Just let someone else // take

REAGAN

You're still doing the best practices workshop with M, correct?

—

Correct?

NINA

Would not miss it.

REAGAN

Cause you literally can't, for // liability.

NINA

Liability I know I ran that training for five years.

Having to take it again as a "returning employee" is —

REAGAN

What?

NINA

— You have enough, today. I'll track the feedings.

REAGAN

I can //

NINA

Just. Go deal with Miriam. Besides, she'll be in a good mood.

REAGAN

After that?

NINA

She thrives on chaos. You of all people should know that.

## 2. SEPTEMBER

*An outdoor picnic table. M holds a clipboard and wears a name badge. A bright-eyed teenager, SEBASTIAN, looks around with wonder. He has the energy of a Boy Scout or a community theater star in a whimsical coming-of-age movie.*

M

And just to wrap up our check list here, can you confirm that you are tuberculosis negative?

SEBASTIAN

Confirmed.

M

Vaccines?

SEBASTIAN

All re-boosted. Harm No Lemur!

M

Huh?

SEBASTIAN

Rule #1. In the, the intern tour guide handbook?

*SEBASTIAN holds up his handbook proudly. It's tabbed, highlighted, and falling apart from careful study. The cover falls off. He beams!*

M

And last but not least: have you ever been convicted of a felony?

SEBASTIAN

Uh

M

Restrictions on your proximity to young children?

SEBASTIAN

I'm just taking a year before college.

M

That's irrelevant.

SEBASTIAN

I'm just here for the lemurs!

M

*(Checking paperwork for his name)*

Listen... Sebastian //

SEBASTIAN

One. Hundred. Percent. For. The. Lemurs.

M

—

Are you gonna be some mouse lemur paparazzi?

SEBASTIAN

Does flash disturb them?!

M

No, I mean — I'm not even the regular intern coordinator, ok?

SEBASTIAN

Cause my first interview was with //

M

Shefali's on leave for the rest of the year  
and I've been — advised — that I need more youth mentoring experiences.

SEBASTIAN

Are you gonna be my mentor?!

M

Maybe just — we had some issues with the summer interns getting distracted, ok?  
Treating the newborn dwarf lemurs like they're JLo.

SEBASTIAN

Salt and Pepa! I've been watching them on the LemurCam.

M

Well. So were the interns. And then they weren't getting feedings done on time.

SEBASTIAN

Ah

M

Which generated some off-camera drama, let's just say.

SEBASTIAN

It won't be — You can count on me.

.

M

*(Clearly reading off their clipboard, extremely flat)*

"Now we're ready to enter the final phase of your volunteer tour guide interview  
First, I will ask you to recite the standard tour introduction from p. 27 of your training handbook."

SEBASTIAN

"So if everyone would gather around" ?

*M nods.*

M

“Then, I will ask you a series of popular questions about our research and discovery teammates: the extraordinary primates who call LemurLab home. Try to answer each question clearly, concisely, and with gratitude for the curiosity of the visitor.”

Christ this copy. ‘K, take it away, kid.

SEBASTIAN

RedLeatherYellowLeather, bbbbBBBBBbbbb, mee-mee-one mee-mee-one

*(He goes into character as Tour Guide)*

“So. If everyone would gather around — this is the 10:45 tour and I am your volunteer tour guide, Sebastian. HELLO! For the next 80 minutes, we will be traveling together through 50 million years of biology in action here at the world-famous LemurLab. Founded 29 years ago by Dr. Anabelle Katz-Carver, we are North Carolina’s — and North America’s — largest research and preservation institute devoted exclusively to prosimians. What’s up with prosimians, you ask? That’s the exclusive tree-dwelling club to which lemurs belong: a smaller group within the order of Primates. And with that, let’s head to the other side of the bamboo grove, where we’ll meet our very first prosimian of the day!”

M

Sup?

SEBASTIAN

Why’d you uh change the name?

M

Right right right.

SEBASTIAN

When I came here as a kid, it was called North Carolina Prosimian Evolution and // Preservation Institute.

M

// Preservation Institute yeah so on the tour, just say “accessibility”

SEBASTIAN

But actually?

M

Search engine optimization. T-shirt sales. And marketing to school groups.

K, moving on to Mock Question One.

SEBASTIAN

Ready.

M

“So a lemur is a monkey, right?”

SEBASTIAN

Great question! Lemurs are close relatives of monkeys, and of humans.  
We all share a common ancestor who lived millions of years ago.

M

—

No.

SEBASTIAN

Wwwhat?

M

That was solid, but you need to start by just saying “no.”

SEBASTIAN

Oh! Definitely.

M

“No, period. Lemurs are not monkeys, period. Period!  
Moving on to Question 2: So how do I tell a “girl lemur” from a “boy lemur”?

SEBASTIAN

*(Knew this question was coming!)*

So, with some other types of animals, you might know that size or distinctive markings differentiate males from females. But that isn’t the story with most types of lemurs!

Take, for instance, our troop of — I’m pretending there are — ring-tailed lemurs over here:  
Check out the males: there’s Falstaff sunning himself on the ground,  
And the females, Goneril and Desdemona //

M

You memorized our lemurs’ names?

SEBASTIAN

Like I said, I watch LemurCam. Ring-Tail Thursday with Dr. Miriam!

M

Ah. Proceed.

SEBASTIAN

If you could get a little closer to these lemurs, you’d see that the males have dark scent glands on the undersides of their wrists — whereas the females do not.

So if you see a ring-tail rubbing its tail on its wrists, getting nice and stinky — that’s a male.

M

Good observable behavior.

SEBASTIAN

Or if you could get up *really* close to the lemur, like a members of our veterinary team,  
You’d also see that male and female lemurs have different — parts.

M  
Genitals.

SEBASTIAN  
Won't that be um a lot? For middle schoolers?

M  
You're here to teach them science, not to coddle their weird angsty puritanism.

SEBASTIAN  
But what about the teachers?

M  
Does saying that word make *you* uncomfortable?

SEBASTIAN  
— no.

M  
Cause I'm really asking. Which is rare for me.

SEBASTIAN  
No! I'm good, I'm —

M  
(*Coaching him*)  
Be chill. Don't leave them space to freak out. And stare those kiddos down like you expect them to be decent adults instead of tiny, caffeinated hell-fiends.

SEBASTIAN  
Noted um thank you. Is it ok if I //

M  
Please

SEBASTIAN  
Last but certainly not least, you can also tell males and female lemurs apart based on social dominance and hierarchy. Does anyone know what the word hierarchy means?

M  
Pretending that I'm an unusually smart sophomore: "Hierarchy is a social system in which individuals have ranking based on various types of power and influence."

SEBASTIAN  
Excellent definition! So most species of lemurs are *female dominant*. What does that mean? It means that if *The Lion King* got rewritten by lemurs, it would be called the Lemur Queen! It means we're looking at a *hierarchy* in which one dominant female calls the shots and other females — related and unrelated by birth — exist in a complex pecking order below her. It means that lemurs,

along with a few other female dominant animals like hyenas, bonobos, and orcas, are the Beyoncé of the animal kingdom!  
Or depending how old you are: the Arethas, the Dollys, the Pattis!

So who runs the lemur world? It. Is. The. Girls!

*In his heart, SEBASTIAN throws his hands up in a perfect balance beam dismount! In his heart, the crowd goes wild!*

M

A little extra with the musical references,  
but school groups and drunk moms are probably gonna love that.

SEBASTIAN

So — ok to keep?

M

Feel it out. Aight Question 3: Are lemurs native to North Carolina?

SEBASTIAN

Do people really ask that?

M

Oh *hell* yes. Brace yourself for a bumper crop a'stupid.

SEBASTIAN

Um. It's easy to believe that they *could* be native, as we're watching this social group of sifakas playing in the forest, right? But actually, lemurs are only *endemic* — which means *native* — to one place in the world. Does anybody know the name of that island nation?

M

*(Whining child voice)*

AFRICA!

SEBASTIAN

Africa is — actually a continent

But the island nation of

Madagascar!

is right off the Eastern *Coast* of Africa. Lemurs share their home

Madagascar!

With thousands of other species that appear nowhere else on Earth

*And* with nearly 26 million Malagasy people who call this extraordinary island home.

M

*(Harsh drawl)*

Then why ain't there no people in the movie *Madagascar*?

I watched that movie with my kid sister Dixie — and we done watched those critters must be near 60 or 70 times. And I ain't never seen no Africans in that there animated fil-um!

SEBASTIAN

Uhhhhh

M

Don't let your face react to the stupid!

SEBASTIAN

Well the umm the movie *Madagascar* is uh amazing in that it shows how many different shapes, sizes, and species of lemurs exist in the world: about 107 known species!

M

108. Malagasy professor found a new mouse lemur last week.

SEBASTIAN

Wow 108 known species!

The film also introduces us to the only native predator of the lemur: the fearsome fossa!  
(*He pronounces it foh-sa*)

M

Foo-ssa

SEBASTIAN

Foo-ssa. Sorry.

M

Good correction.

*A warm second.*

SEBASTIAN

The fearsome fossa! But *Madagascar* also fails to acknowledge  
How the delicate balance between humans and their environment  
Has been thrown off by rapid deforestation, mining, and burning across the island.  
How — sorry to stop, but how political am I allowed to get?

M

Like on the general tour?

SEBASTIAN

I know that LemurLab strives to be a welcoming space for all, but  
Can I tell visitors about the scars of French colonialism, in a welcoming way?

*A warm second.*

M

Huh.

SEBASTIAN

Is that —

M

That's a really good idea.

SEBASTIAN

Even though it's not in //

M

This handbook is ready for the trash. Literally. Figuratively. Mostly literally. Ok well I have a meeting in fifteen minutes, so you're in, kid.

SEBASTIAN

*(eyes growing wide)*

Seriously?

M

Here's your lanyard or whatever.

SEBASTIAN

This is such an honor!

M

Yeah yeah you're welcome.

SEBASTIAN

Thank you, boss!

M

Don't call me boss. Are we even paying you?

SEBASTIAN

Is M short for Emily?

M

No. It's short for the letter M.

SEBASTIAN

Got it.

M

Good. Now let's go over fig-washing protocol.

*A lemur cry!*

### 3. SEPTEMBER

*REAGAN is in her office. A distinctive knock on the door: MIRIAM's knock.*

REAGAN  
One second.

*REAGAN swipes on some lip balm. Smooths her hair.  
Maybe she unbuttons a button on her shirt.*

REAGAN  
Come // in.

*MIRIAM enters and immediately closes the door behind her.*

MIRIAM  
Did you know? About her leaving?

REAGAN  
I had a general sense?

MIRIAM  
General. Really?

REAGAN  
Uh //

MIRIAM  
Do you know *why*?

REAGAN  
Probably a question for Anabelle.

MIRIAM  
Is that a very convoluted yes?

REAGAN  
No.

MIRIAM  
So no?

REAGAN  
No.

*A hot second.*

MIRIAM  
'K well, glad we had this talk. I was hoping for slightly less *generality*, but //

REAGAN

She's pretending not to be home. I went by this morning.

MIRIAM

Well sometimes the only way to get through to her is emotional terrorism.  
Which we both, y'know, learned from the best.

REAGAN

Yep.

*A hot minute. They're very conscious not to look at each other.*

MIRIAM

We should uh —  
Probably just go [together]. Right?

REAGAN

I can't leave until 6.

MIRIAM

Do you wanna drive? Or?

REAGAN

I'll meet you.

MIRIAM

Oh-kay then.

—

That's a good shirt by the way it's new right?

REAGAN

Ish.

MIRIAM

It's good. On you. Though you probably have to dry-clean, which I hate.

REAGAN

Yeah.

MIRIAM

—

6:15 then. Don't be late.

*A lemur cry!*

#### 4. SEPTEMBER

*Back at the outdoor picnic table. End of the Best Practices workshop.  
SEBASTIAN wears his new tour guide vest.  
As they talk, SEBASTIAN, M, and NINA are cutting up figs.*

SEBASTIAN  
So I can't touch them?

NINA  
We want to avoid — sorry, muscle memory.

M  
I'm taking notes. Please.

NINA  
We want to avoid any additional stress for the lemurs.

SEBASTIAN  
What if a lemur touches me first?

NINA  
Just gently encourage that return to a safe location.

SEBASTIAN  
Harm No Lemur

M  
The animal's participation is always voluntary.

SEBASTIAN  
But what if you really, really need them to volunteer?

NINA  
The number one rule — for researchers, for vet techs, for interns — is Never Break Trust. You can always affirm positive behaviors with the whistle or with a Craisin.

SEBASTIAN  
A raisin-plus-cranberry?

*M holds up a Craisin.*

M  
Cranberry-plus-raisin. If lemurs had a religion, it would be Craisins.

*M throws the Craisin up and catches it in their mouth.*

SEBASTIAN

Just like — from the grocery story?

M

We get them in bulk, big boxes. 50 pounds at a time.

NINA

Always carry a few in your tour guide vest.

SEBASTIAN

Ooo inside pockets!

M

Also: great if someone on your tour gets a sugar crash

SEBASTIAN

What should I do in case of medical emergency?

M

Yell loud. Dial 911. Get the ice pack.

NINA

I'm sure that isn't going to happen for you, Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN

I have to be prepared. For anything.

*A hot second.*

M

Well — I think that's probably enough for a Friday, yeah?

SEBASTIAN

Thank you for supplementing my training, Dr. Workman.

NINA

Congrats on joining our — intern team. You good on that route back to the parking lot?

SEBASTIAN

Left, then //

M

Left, left, long corridor out. On your way, you can drop these figs at Enclosure 7.

SEBASTIAN

Don't you need to supervise?

M

Always double check they're washed. Down the chute, like I showed you.  
And leave the bowl in the food prep room. Check?

SEBASTIAN  
Check check.

M  
See you Monday.

*SEBASTIAN exits with a small bowl of figs.*

M  
(Calling down the hall)  
Don't forget your lanyard!

NINA  
The unpaid interns have really upped their game since my day.

M  
Very. Perky.

NINA  
You like your volunteers sulky and jaded?

M  
I like — not kids.

NINA  
You an only child?

M  
Military brat.  
Childhood was kindof a relative term.

*A cold second.*

NINA  
Can you pass me — thanks. So, everyone's favorite question when you're working on a PhD //

M  
Dwarf lemur hibernation.

NINA  
What! You're the one who got the NASA funding!

M  
It me.

NINA  
What are they hoping for? The magic primate gene that kicks astronauts into torpor and lets them maintain all their muscle mass?

M

Don't tell the space gods, but that's 20 years away, at least.

NINA

Never say never.

M

All this time tracking hibernation body temperature: if I get to live on Jupiter, fair trade.

NINA

How far into your program are you?

M

Third year.

NINA

Chuggin'.

M

Actually, I think I started the year you left for —

NINA

ARGGH?

M

Arghh?

NINA

A.R.G.G.H. We do — they do — high value risk assessment for banks, hedge funds  
Branding was not the strong suit, clearly.

M

Sounds lucrative.

NINA

It was.

M

And you came back here to be. Sorry what's your title again?

NINA

Director of Lemur Behavior. And Enrichment!

M

You must — really like lemurs.

NINA

That's what my Grammy said: judgy but fair.

M  
Why'd you leave this humble wonderland in the first place?

NINA  
It's complicated.

M  
Innnnteresting.

NINA  
One of my co-worker really didn't like me, for reasons I don't totally understand.

M  
We got a lotta time to kill with these figs—

NINA  
I'm sure you've heard some good good gossip already.

M  
That you're supremely competent and really nice?

NINA  
Lies, as you see.

M  
I had pretty reliable sources.

NINA  
Reagan diplomacy?

M  
She does love competence, but not her.

—

Wait. She's not named after //

*NINA nods grimly.*

NINA  
Don't ask.

M  
How'd I miss that?

NINA  
Don't get curious. Don't do it.

M  
Mistake you've made?

NINA

Not personally. Anabelle was staying with Miriam and Ray when she //

M

Ohhh they were roommates?

NINA

She crashed with them for a month maybe, or two, after the fire.

M

Was this when Dr. K lost —

NINA

She was pretty inconsolable, so. Honestly, they're like her adopted daughters. None of them would say it that way, especially then, but —

M

They lived together? Miriam and Ray.

NINA

Yeah this was back when they were a. You know.

M

They dated?

NINA

*(Sincerely embarrassed)*

Shit. Sorry that was um Very Common Knowledge for a while.

M

Lemur Mafia!

NINA

Yeah it's pretty, pretty incestuous

*Split stage: lights up on the ring-tailed lemur enclosure.  
SEBASTIAN is delivering a bowl of figs. He looks over his shoulder.  
An elderly female ring-tail — CORDELIA — is watching him.  
SEBASTIAN stops dead in his tracks.*

SEBASTIAN

Hey, girl.

*CORDELIA cocks her head.*

SEBASTIAN

Or sorry I mean — woman. Female?

*CORDELIA gives him a look like “aw baby.”*

SEBASTIAN

I brought your Friday figs. You hungry, lemur pal?

*CORDELIA is noncommittal.*

SEBASTIAN

Sorry if I smell like Nana’s weird blankets. I know scents freak you out.

I’m new here. My name is Sebastian,

And a fun fact about me is that I really like dipping Hot Cheetos in Frostys.

But only vanilla. Chocolate would be gross.

*Back to M and NINA.*

M

Was that ever weird? With the two of them?

NINA

Not when things were good. I mean for a while it was very:

Aw cute, y’all are sharing the same jackets and socks all winter

M

And when things were bad?

NINA

A — low-hanging haze of smoldering contempt? But it must be better now, if you’ve never //

*Back to SEBASTIAN and CORDELIA.*

*CORDELIA moves towards the figs, revealing a scar on her side.*

SEBASTIAN

Hold the phones. Are you — ?

*SEBASTIAN tries to take a closer look at CORDELIA’s side.*

*She keeps pivoting away, almost like she’s teasing him.*

SEBASTIAN

Cordelia?

*CORDELIA takes a fig and holds it aloft like a scepter.*

SEBASTIAN

Oh my god wow I feel like I’m talking to Audra, to Bernadette this is a lot.

*CORDELIA spreads her arms and arches her back: “TIS I !!!”*

*SEBASTIAN is so surprised that he almost finds himself bowing?*

SEBASTIAN

You must hear this all the time, but um I had a poster of you in my sixth grade locker.

*CORDELIA nibbles on her fig.*

SEBASTIAN

“Lemur Queen.” With your hand print.

*CORDELIA holds up her hand.*

SEBASTIAN

Whoa, did you understand that?

*CORDELIA puts up her other hand. SEBASTIAN puts up his hands. He claps. CORDELIA — doesn't clap. She stares at SEBASTIAN curiously, then starts to walk away.*

SEBASTIAN

Was clapping not — ?

*CORDELIA looks over her shoulder.*

SEBASTIAN

That's such a Nana look! When I leave my sparkle Converse in the kitchen: that's the look!

*CORDELIA gives him another look like “Ya, I'm well aware.”*

SEBASTIAN

Sorry. I mean. I'll try to be less condescending in the future —

*CORDELIA sort of nods and carries on her way. SEBASTIAN is struck by wonder.*

SEBASTIAN

— Your highness.

*Back to NINA and M.*

M

There's not *not* some residual weirdness now.

NINA

Like they've come to a work-truce?

M

Like a rivalry, maybe. But vague.

NINA

They're both the kind of smart, vaguely terrifying people  
Who keep lots of space between what they think and what they say. At least — Ray is.

M

I know that [feeling]— yeah.

NINA

Not to be blunt, but  
They've kind of done a number on each other. For a long time now.

M

I can believe that.

NINA

Yeah. For a long, long time.

*A lemur cry, which morphs and fades and —*

## 5. FIFTEEN YEAR AGO

*REAGAN's college dorm room. The mid '00s.  
REAGAN and MIRIAM are nineteen. They're tipsy.*

*These young women would, in some ways, be shocking and  
unrecognizable to themselves now. In other ways, they would be all too familiar.*

*MIRIAM speaks with a more prominent accent. She wears a flannel.  
REAGAN might be wearing two polos with the collars popped.*

*To start, we cannot see them in the dark. The creak of a door opening.*

MIRIAM

*(whispering)*

Your suitemate is sleeping?

*The sound of a hamper toppling over.*

MIRIAM *(cont'd)*

Put a madre

*Naughty giggling.*

REAGAN

Not anymore.

*Something else topples over. More naughty giggling.  
REAGAN hits the light, revealing a bed bedecked in many, many pillows.  
Some are monogrammed. Some are gingham.  
Some are embroidered with tiny palmetto trees and crescent moons.*

MIRIAM

Oh my god, so many pillows!

REAGAN

Yup.

MIRIAM

Where should I put my uh [coat]?

REAGAN

There's a door hook or the — yeah, wherever. Wherever's good.

MIRIAM

Thank you for helping me to escape.

REAGAN

No doubt. You seemed pretty bored with — Brian?

MIRIAM

*(Gross)*

Brian. What a tragedy name.

REAGAN

You're not trying to make that a thing?

MIRIAM

He's in my Orgo lab.

REAGAN

Cause he's definitely trying to make that a thing.

MIRIAM

He smells like eggs. Besides, not my type.

*A hot minute. It's awkward.*

REAGAN

Can I get you some tea?

MIRIAM

No I //

REAGAN

A beer or something? I think we have Miller //

MIRIAM

The champagne of beers! You're running a classy gin joint, toots.

*REAGAN laughs.*

MIRIAM

*(She knows what)*

What?

REAGAN

You just. You *seem* like you'd be into old movies.

MIRIAM

Yeah I talk like Humphrey Bogart when I'm drunk.

REAGAN

Is there a — story there?

MIRIAM

It's so stupid//

REAGAN

Tell // me

MIRIAM

No no you don't wanna // hear

REAGAN

Tell me.

MIRIAM

If you insist. So for one semester of eighth grade my English teacher  
Not English like you use it, but learning to speak //

REAGAN

Right // right

MIRIAM

The teacher was out with a baby or something and we had this — *sustituta*?  
That's a cognate, ya? Sorry my brain gets a little whoooo

REAGAN

Was she a good substitute or //

MIRIAM

She was the worst substitute. Fuck this substitute.  
Gutiérrez.

REAGAN

Gutiérrez.

MIRIAM

She was old as god, she looked like a goldfish. And instead of teaching us conjugations  
She played the stupid *Casablanca* every fucking day

REAGAN

Isn't that supposed to be a pretty good movie?

MIRIAM

Not for five months! So everyone in my eighth grade hates *Casablanca*, but we all have it  
memorized. In English. And I had a lot of sexy dream about Indrid Berman, Ingdrid *fuck*.  
You know who I mean.

REAGAN

So that's your type?

MIRIAM

Who knows. My parents didn't let me date. Especially not ehm who I wanted.

REAGAN  
Ah.

MIRIAM  
Anyway, that's dumb. A dumb story.  
—  
Can I tell you a secret, for penance?

REAGAN  
You don't — ok.

*MIRIAM takes a big gulp of beer.*

MIRIAM  
My plan.

REGEAN  
Mhm?

MIRIAM  
Is to double major with Film Studies so I can wind up like Bill, el Científico.  
You have him here, no?

REAGAN  
You mean Bill Nye? With the bow tie?

MIRIAM  
I'll be a famous TV scientist. Like Bill. But hot.  
*(She gets hit by a little wave of nausea and belches a little.)*  
Sorry, can I have tea instead of this beer champagne?

REAGAN  
Sure.

MIRIAM  
Sorry to be lame.

REAGAN  
You're good. I'll //

*MIRIAM collapses onto the bed.*

MIRIAM  
Pillows!

REAGAN  
I'll just grab — Make yourself at home. Obviously.

*REAGAN exits, shutting the door quietly behind her.*

*MIRIAM pulls herself up from the bed and snoops. She touches framed photos. She picks up the hamper that she kicked over in the dark. A pair of underwear falls out. Should she — pick them up?*

*Footsteps in the hall. MIRIAM panics! She puts the underwear in the hamper with her foot. She takes them back out with her foot. She runs over to the bookshelf and opens a book at random! It's a textbook with a lemur on the cover.*

*REAGAN comes back with two mugs of hot water. She closes the door.*

REAGAN  
We're out of tea bags, so I just put a lemon //

MIRIAM  
What's this cute, weird animal?

REAGAN  
Oh it's um a lemur

MIRIAM  
Like a big-eyes monkey, no? Thanks.

REAGAN  
Careful it's [hot]— Um they're primates. But they're not monkeys, exactly.

MIRIAM  
You study not-monkeys?

REAGAN  
Yeah I'm hopefully sticking around this summer to do research with one of my professors //

MIRIAM  
Sucks they never pick sophomores.

REAGAN  
That's what my advisor told me too. But yeah, I didn't really wanna go home to Charleston. And this professor invited me already so //

MIRIAM  
Whose lab?

REAGAN  
Dr. Katz-Carver.

MIRIAM  
Who just won a // MacArthur?

REAGAN

She won a MacArthur, yeah.

One of the TAs announced it in lecture. They brought a cake.

MIRIAM

The other professors assign all her early papers

REAGAN

On quantifying power in primate hierarchies?

MIRIAM

She's huge. She's a huge fucking deal.

REAGAN

I guess

MIRIAM

And so much data!

REAGAN

We just watch these lemurs. Like who ate. Who drank. How much. What order.  
So many, so many hours.

MIRIAM

She must be tough.

REAGAN

I love it. She's definitely uh pushed me, though. In a good way.

*A hot second.*

MIRIAM

Are *you* a big deal?

REAGAN

What?

MIRIAM

In the biology department.

REAGAN

No.

MIRIAM

Professors like that never pick sophomores.

REAGAN

Not never, I guess just. Very lucky.

MIRIAM  
Whatever you say.

*A hot second. They both sip their lemon water.*

MIRIAM (*cont'd*)  
You must really like rap music, no?

REAGAN  
Uhhh.  
Not —really. Why?

MIRIAM  
Cause you have R.A.P written on these mugs,  
And also your slippers and picture frames and // stuff

REAGAN  
Ohhh no no no. That's no, that's my monogram!

MIRIAM  
Your initials?

REAGAN  
Like my initials. Exactly!

MIRIAM  
But your last name is Adams?

REAGAN  
So your last name goes in the middle. And then your middle name,  
or I guess maybe your maiden name eventually, goes on the end.

MIRIAM  
What if you have more than three initials?

REAGAN  
You mean double first names? Mary Grace? Sierra Renee //

MIRIAM  
No like I have seven initials.

REAGAN  
Seven? *How?*

MIRIAM  
My family's really into names. Like maybe it's a Sephardic thing.

REAGAN  
That's Jewish, right?

MIRIAM

It's a type of — it's what my family is yeah

REAGAN

Are *you* Jewish?

MIRIAM

I believe in one God. Or fewer.  
Tell me more about monograms.

REAGAN

Um they're pretty much just like a way to make towels or whatever dumb gift feel more Personal? For graduations or debutante balls or //

MIRIAM

Debutantes! Those are the gringo quinces, right?

REAGAN

They're like practice weddings for teenagers.

MIRIAM

But they're super Catholic?

REAGAN

The opposite of Catholic. In Charleston, at // least

MIRIAM

Wait. Are *you* a debutante?!

REAGAN

Nah.

MIRIAM

You were!

REAGAN

It got complicated.

MIRIAM

Cause you were too fucking cool!

REAGAN

My //

MIRIAM

Too cool for all the waltzing, right?

REAGAN

No, I couldn't do it cause my mom is white.

*A hot second.*

MIRIAM  
There's a —

REAGAN  
Not officially.

MIRIAM  
But?

REAGAN  
Uh. There are Black Debutante Clubs. There are White Debutante Clubs.  
They haven't really figured out what to do with adoption yet.

MIRIAM  
They should work on that.

REAGAN  
Probably a few more urgent things to — yeah.  
They should.

MIRIAM  
These are your parents in the picture?  
—  
They're at some kind of concert here?

REAGAN  
No, they're at the RNC.

MIRIAM  
Is that a monogram?

REAGAN  
Sorry the uh Republican National Convention.  
They met working on a political campaign in the '80s.

MIRIAM  
Not. For?

REAGAN  
Yeah.

MIRIAM  
Are you joking?

REAGAN  
I wish.

MIRIAM

Wow! Wow! Do you get sick of //

REAGAN

Hell yes. Hell yes yes. I'll probably change it eventually.

MIRIAM

—

Her sleeves are very puffy.

REAGAN

Yep. That's *Gail*.

MIRIAM

*Gail*.

REAGAN

Her sleeves are big cause they're full of contradictions.

MIRIAM

She looks very — how do you say?

Is she a bit of a cunt?

*REAGAN chokes on her water.*

REAGAN

What — did you — ?

MIRIAM

You alright?

REAGAN

Wow, I know you didn't just // call my mom

MIRIAM

I'm sorry I'm // sorry the way you said her name

REAGAN

What's wrong with you?!

MIRIAM

No I'm so sorry is this one of those English words everyone sings but you're not allowed to say it?

REAGAN

It's one of those words!

MIRIAM

But it's less bad than bitch, right?

REAGAN

No, it's like — if bitch is a 4, then what you said is like a 9.

MIRIAM

No! I thought it was a 2!

REAGAN

Not a 2. Not for moms.

MIRIAM

I'm so sorry to your mom I thought it was like "annoying," but more.

REAGAN

Not at all.

MIRIAM

Like an annoying tiny bird that's really loud in the morning!

REAGAN

It's ok.

MIRIAM

Like tweet tweet! "Shut up, you little //

*A quiet knock knock knock.*

ROOMMATE

Reagan?

REAGAN

Hey. You good?

ROOMMATE

Just um can you please keep it down? I have an Orgo final tomorrow.

REAGAN

Yea yea for sure. I'm // sorry

ROOMMATE

Cause we talked about weeknight rules for the suite

*REAGAN rolls her eyes.*

REAGAN

Of course.

ROOMMATE

We all agreed. Not to //

REAGAN  
No for sure.

*MIRIAM does something wacky, maybe pretends to shoot a blowdart or an arrow through he door. REAGAN cracks up.*

ROOMMATE  
Is there someone in there with//

REAGAN  
My friend is just — she's picking up a book.

ROOMMATE  
Ok. Well.

REAGAN  
We'll keep it down. Good luck on your Orgo final.

ROOMMATE  
*(fake nice)*  
Aww thank you. I've been studying for like thirteen hours straight so //

REAGAN  
Night.

ROOMMATE  
— Night.

*A cool minute.*

MIRIAM  
Am I allowed to call your suitemate that word?

REAGAN  
No. Annoying and tiny but ya know. Not —

MIRIAM  
A tiny bird.

REAGAN  
Wait, didn't you say you're in Orgo?

MIRIAM  
It's a truth.

REAGAN  
So don't you have that final tomorrow?

MIRIAM

Eh, I already studied.

REAGAN

You sure?

MIRIAM

Other people psych themselves out, if they haven't done the work.

They need to prove how hard they tried.

They want their lab group to see them breaking down at 3 in the morning.

REAGAN

That's. I think that's usually sincere.

MIRIAM

Maybe. That's not me.

I know what I know.

*A very hot minute.*

MIRIAM (*cont'd*)

Should I leave?

REAGAN

No. Unless obviously if you want // to

MIRIAM

Like I said.

I know what I know.

*MIRIAM leans very close to REAGAN.*

*A moment of uncertainty. They stare at each other.*

*Remember when it felt so scary & sacred to kiss someone?*

*Maybe you do, these days.*

*Almost seems like this isn't going to happen.*

*But then REAGAN kisses MIRIAM.*

*They keep kissing. They fall back into —*

MIRIAM

Pillows.

REAGAN

All the pillows.

MIRIAM

Can I —

REAGAN

Hold on, one second.

MIRIAM

Should //

REAGAN

Just stay right there.

—

I'm going to want to remember this.

I'm going to think back to this moment hundreds of times over the next fifteen years.

Try to remember if you kissed me or I kissed you, the first time.

If you'd chopped your hair off yet. If your smell changed.

—

Ok.

*Gently, they start to undress each other.*

*Under their clothes are other clothes. Familiar, adult clothes.*

*Gently, they take off each other's nineteen year old hair.*

*Under their hair is their adult hair.*

*They put on fifteen years.*

*There's a gap of space and coldness between them now.*

## 6. SEPTEMBER

*Back in the present, on the stoop of Anabelle's house.  
There are some very tasteful flower pots and a very tacky gnome.*

MIRIAM  
You're late.

REAGAN  
Got caught up in // something.

MIRIAM  
She leaves us no choice.

REAGAN  
Maybe we should //

MIRIAM  
*(Kicking on the door)*  
I'm standing out here with an aye-aye, Anabelle,  
I'm gonna feed it a bite of avocado for every minute you don't answer this door!

REAGAN  
What if she's actually not home?

MIRIAM  
Light's on in the back study.  
—  
Do you want this aye-aye's safety on your conscience?!

REAGAN  
Hold up.

MIRIAM  
You're being a little //

REAGAN  
Shhhh! When I point to you, start screaming.

MIRIAM  
Why?

REAGAN  
Just — !

*REAGAN throws herself against the door. She points to MIRIAM, who screams.*

REAGAN  
Oh shit! Shit, Anabelle, open the door. Miriam broke her leg!

*MIRIAM kindof whimpers?*

REAGAN (*cont'd*)

She's — *very hurt*. There's a lot of blood! Anabelle please open // up

*The door opens.*

*A very crisp woman in her mid 60s, ANABELLE, stands in the doorway.*

ANABELLE

Where's —

Oh hell no.

MIRIAM

Don't let her close the // door!

ANABELLE

What part of turning my phone off can't you understand?

REAGAN

We need to talk. We've been getting calls from //

ANABELLE

None of their business.

MIRIAM

Well you made it our business by announcing your retirement at a gala  
In front of 200 donors. And the whole staff. On a Thursday.

ANABELLE

Get off my stoop!

REAGAN

*Stop* yelling so loud you're gonna get us shot //

ANABELLE

I try to forget who my neighbors are.

REAGAN

Well I don't have that luxury.

MIRIAM

Besides, we know where the extra key is.

ANABELLE

What extra key?

MIRIAM

Hollow ass porch gnome? Please.

*A hot second.*

ANABELLE  
Come in, then.

*They do. MIRIAM and REAGAN intuitively leave shoes on the hall mat.*

MIRIAM  
I've been hiding on your stoop for 15 minutes, so I've gotta pee before we interrogate you, k?

*MIRIAM heads to the bathroom, clearly comfortable in the house.*

ANABELLE  
Grab toilet paper from the hall closet!

REAGAN  
D'you have any soda?

ANABELLE  
No, but there's tea. Caffeine headaches back?

REAGAN  
*(pressing her eyes)*  
Present company leaves a lot to be desired. Sorry. *Some* of the company.

ANABELLE  
I can never keep track: are you two fucking or feuding this week?

REAGAN  
That's hurtful.

ANABELLE  
You're hurtful to yourselves.  
You should have broken up five years ago, when we were in Ranomafana.

REAGAN  
We did.

ANABELLE  
Then you should have kept it that way. Or else, gotten married by now.

REAGAN  
You of all people rail constantly against marriage.

ANABELLE  
Eh. I'll try anything once. Need something stronger?

REAGAN  
Not good for — you know.

ANABELLE  
Bourbon helps my headaches immensely.

REAGAN  
(*Pointing upstairs*).  
Her recovery

ANABELLE  
She's never going to conferences again? Concerts where they sell beer?

REAGAN  
She needs your support.

ANABELLE  
Stop coddling. Besides, you both have long track records of restraint while you're in agony.

REAGAN  
You mean our families?

ANABELLE  
(*Straight up*)  
That is not the matter to which I refer.

*A hot second.*

REAGAN  
So. You gonna tell us what's up?

ANABELLE  
Wait til Meer gets down, you know I don't like to repeat myself.  
How was today?

REAGAN  
Lots of calls from your esteemed colleagues

ANABELLE  
You mentioned.

REAGAN  
Wanted to check that you're alright

ANABELLE  
How palpably could you feel them circling?

REAGAN  
Circling?

ANABELLE  
Like buzzards. Round a possum on the highway.

REAGAN  
I don't // think

ANABELLE  
You know how often it's suggested to me — casually of course — that I should retire?  
Make room for someone younger, sharper, preferably with nicer tits?

REAGAN  
You have lovely — bosoms.

ANABELLE  
Ugh even that word is saggy. *Bosoms*.

MIRIAM  
(*Walking in*)  
Is it breast cancer?

ANABELLE  
Where'd you get that idea?

MIRIAM  
(*Grabbing a peach off the counter*)  
Heard you talking 'bout tits. Or as I call 'em, ribs!  
Can I have this tea?

REAGAN  
Nope.

MIRIAM  
But it's in my mug —

REAGAN  
Just cause you like it and use it doesn't make it "your mug."

MIRIAM  
No need to be petty. So.

ANABELLE  
Sit down.

MIRIAM  
Oh god, it actually is bad.

ANABELLE  
I mean there's an acronym, so it's not — There's a range.

REAGAN  
Do you need a pillow?

ANABELLE

Your decency and kindness are exhausting. Please. Sit.

*A hot second.*

ANABELLE

So, to begin. You've noticed that I've been a real pain in the ass lately.

REAGAN

I wouldn't //

MIRIAM

Even more than usual.

ANABELLE

Well. No need to go into gruesome detail, but I've been feeling, for months, a bit — foggy.

REAGAN

Your literal vision?

ANABELLE

Like when you're trying to open a new jar of mayo, but can't get your grip.  
But I'd only been sleeping on, off, sometimes 3, 4 hours a night  
Big surprise: I feel like Godzilla.

MIRIAM

Godzilla *would* be bad at opening jars. With those little — what?

ANABELLE

Anyway. Three Sundays ago, I woke up, rolled out of bed, went outside to get the paper, and I remembered I was out of milk

MIRIAM

Why don't they deliver milk anymore? People would love that, in the cute glass // bottles

REAGAN

Can you stop?

MIRIAM

What I'm nervous we're all nervous! Sorry, continue.

ANABELLE

So I tossed on my slacks and drove down to the Piggly Wiggly to pick up half a gallon  
Came home, took out a mug, ran the percolator or  
You know, the machine the dripper  
Poured my new milk. And I went to put the the —

REAGAN

The carton?

ANABELLE

Back inside the fridge yes and suddenly I was hit by this awful  
Wave of fog

REAGAN

Fog?

ANABELLE

Or misty I mean sometimes it's mist it's less dense  
Not quite so hard to navigate. But this was deep, cold fog  
Like I had been in that moment before, but also I had not  
I was holding the milk, but also I just absolutely was not.

And inside the fridge  
On the shelf in front of me  
There were three other half-gallons of milk  
Unexpired. Almost completely full.

REAGAN

That — you'd bought?

ANABELLE

Presumably.

MIRIAM

But you have no memory of how they got there?

ANABELLE

Hadn't the foggiest.

MIRIAM

So uh  
You're being haunted by cows.

ANABELLE

Exactly.

REAGAN

Have you been to a doctor?

ANABELLE

That's the formal diagnosis. Ghost cows.

MIRIAM

Udderly ghastly

REAGAN

Lord

ANABELLE

Is it me, or is her sense of humor regressing?

REAGAN

I'm not // answering that.

MIRIAM

She won't answer that.

*A hot minute.*

ANABELLE

Anyway, it's dementia. I'm demented.

REAGAN

Anabelle.

MIRIAM

Is it Alzheimer's?

ANABELLE

No no, just my luck I don't even get the name brand —  
Oh god your faces — look, do me a favor?

MIRIAM

Obviously. Anything we can //

ANABELLE

Spare me this part. Go home. Google it: dementia with Lewy bodies.

REAGAN

Lewy with a y?

ANABELLE

Or DLB. There's even an acronym, like I said  
So you know we're still living the nightmare called modernity.  
Read the latest journal articles. Call your old roommates who are doctors.  
Watch the TikTok TokTik

REAGAN

*(quietly)*  
TikTok.

ANABELLE

Whatever. And glance over the latest stats on the auditory hallucinations —  
Don't miss those, they're particularly fun. I told you, don't look at me like //

MIRIAM

I'm just shocked you know TikTok!

ANABELLE

Bullshit, m'dear. You think I didn't get to recognize that sad squint?  
After the funeral, all those neighbors in the drugstore?

REAGAN

Just.  
If there's anything //

ANABELLE

Stop. Feel bad for me in the privacy of your own home.  
Or ideally not at all!

MIRIAM

Can I ask one question?

ANABELLE

One.

MIRIAM

How fast is this gonna go?

ANABELLE

Doctors love to be vague. From what I gather, it'll be faster than slow, but slower than overnight.  
I'll be able to bluff until the end of the Spring, when I "retire."

MIRIAM

And after that?

ANABELLE

That. Is a second question!  
Ray, you get one also, in fairness.

REAGAN

Can I save mine? For something you really don't want to answer?

ANABELLE

Long as you don't forget it in the back of the fridge! Ha!

MIRIAM

I believe that's called hypocrisy, ma'am.

ANABELLE

I believe you're correct.  
Alright, enough apocalyptic tea drinking. You stayin' for dinner?

MIRIAM

I am.

REAGAN

Do you want us to?

ANABELLE

Nah, just a fake invitation to make you feel warm and affirmed.  
One of my strengths, haven't you noticed?

REAGAN

I have.

I have.

ANABELLE

Don't worry, m'dear. This mind hasn't shriveled up like a prune quite yet.

REAGAN

—

What um

What can we help with?

ANABELLE

Zucchini or green beans? And uh keep this between us. Strictly, alright?

MIRIAM

Alright.

REAGAN

I think that's a terrible decision.

ANABELLE

I know you do.

REAGAN

The staff'll want to support you: M's dad went through //

ANABELLE

Like I said, decency is exhausting. To me. Ok?

REAGAN

Fine.

ANABELLE

Good. Throw me that salad spinner.

## 7. NOVEMBER

*Time passes.*

*Two months later. The first day of November. The lemur forest. Morning.*

*NINA & MIRIAM both wear fleeces and carry Workabout Mobile Computers, which look like bulky graphing calculators. It's cold out — particularly between these two.*

*They watch in silence for a few moments.*

*Throughout the conversation, they mostly keep their eyes straight ahead, on the lemurs.*

MIRIAM

November 1st, 9:02 AM. Livinia bites Hamlet.

*They watch in silence for a few moments.*

NINA

November 1st, 9:03 AM. Apparent conflict over sunning spot. Desdemona chases Porter.

MIRIAM

How are you differentiating a chase from a lunge, for the ring-tails?

NINA

Number of steps by the aggressor.

MIRIAM

Hm. That's one way to do it.

NINA

—

Desdemona loves that branch.

MIRIAM

Yup.

NINA

She was little bitty last time I saw her.

MIRIAM

She was worried you forgot all about her.

NINA

Never. My colleagues found my lemur nostalgia very funny.

MIRIAM

At the bank?

NINA

It's not a — yeah, at ARGGH

MIRIAM

ARGGH right. Did the ARGGH financiers like Shakespeare?  
All our little rituals, with offspring inheriting their mother's plays?

NINA

What makes you think that?

MIRIAM

Cause they're donors. Or — they will be, in 10, 15 years.  
Donors love a good *reference*.

NINA

You don't like a good reference?

MIRIAM

Doesn't matter what I like. If we can balance our budget by humoring a natural gas billionaire who did some community theater // then

NINA

*(Raising a finger to shut MIRIAM up)*

Can you —

November 1st, 9:04 AM. Desdemona lunges at Hamlet.  
Sorry, you were saying?

MIRIAM

Nothing.

*A cold minute.*

NINA

Oh!

MIRIAM

She's just showing off.

NINA

*(Re: recording)*

You're not tracking intrasexual aggression?

MIRIAM

Anabelle's dealing with that. Ever since those two sensed something's off with Cordelia, they've been circling each other, then a little test against the alpha, then back to circling each other, checking in with their alliances.

NINA

I've never been around to watch an inheritance.

MIRIAM

That's — a romantic way to say it.

NINA

That's what it is, no?

—

Look at their tails go.

MIRIAM

Little stink battle.

NINA

It's beautiful how much fighting they can do without ever touching each other.

How did your screening interview go, by the way?

MIRIAM

For the Directorship?

NINA

I assumed you're applying, sorry, maybe that's

MIRIAM

We'll see. We'll see if the Hiring Committee wants someone flashy from out of state.

NINA

Besides, what am I saying? I'm sure you don't have to be screened, after all this time on staff!

MIRIAM

—

Did you apply?

NINA

I just got back. Besides,

Three, four schools have tried to poach Ray for tenure-track by now, right?

MIRIAM

You'd know better than me.

NINA

And your — all your internet videos have been such a hit, right?

What's it's called, LemurClips LemurScreen //

MIRIAM

LemurCam.

NINA

With Dr. Miriam! I love that.

MIRIAM

—

So you didn't apply?

NINA

Do you think I should?

MIRIAM

No just. To your credit, you're — very good in a crisis.

NINA

Still, don't think anyone could accuse me of genius or a large tween fanbase.

MIRIAM

Are those requirements?

NINA

You'll have to tell me.

*A hot second.*

NINA (*cont'd*)

Early mornings: gettin' cold!

MIRIAM

Feeling your own fingers is overrated.

NINA

Take my gloves.

MIRIAM

No no I'm good.

NINA

You sure? I'm about to stuff them away in my pocket anyway.

*MIRIAM really wants those fucking gloves.*

MIRIAM

Thanks though.

NINA

Death to martyrdom?

MIRIAM

I'm sure.

NINA

Look!

Wow, there goes

That's another lunge, yeah?

**8. NOVEMBER**

*The ring-tailed lemur enclosure. SEBASTIAN is changing the water and perhaps gathering up some food scraps. Maybe he's humming to himself. Let the actor playing SEBASTIAN pick something he enjoys.*

*CORDELIA watches.*

*ANABELLE walks into the enclosure. She listens for a moment.*

ANABELLE

Will you be here all week?

SEBASTIAN

Sorry, I didn't realize that Cordelia was scheduled for enrichment right // now

ANABELLE

I just stopped by for a visit.

SEBASTIAN

Are you doing research together?

ANABELLE

Not at the moment, but we've been close acquaintances since she was born.

SEBASTIAN

Whaaa? Were you in the room where it — *restraint*.

ANABELLE

I was slightly preoccupied.

She and my daughter have the same birthday.

SEBASTIAN

Lemur twin! She must love that.

ANABELLE

Who?

SEBASTIAN

Your daughter!

ANABELLE

Ah, she found it very charming, yes.

They had a joint birthday party once, at the staff's insistence.

SEBASTIAN

Annual tradition?

ANABELLE

Probably not.

SEBASTIAN

Like my Nana says: you're never too old for a birthday.

ANABELLE

Interesting hypothesis. One that Cordelia may disprove shortly, based on her bloodwork. Twenty-seven years young. That's a good run, eh lovely?

SEBASTIAN

Are her leukocyte counts off?

ANABELLE

They — yes actually. Are you Pre-Med?

SEBASTIAN

I haven't declared my major yet. But my dad's in the process of becoming a leukemia survivor.

ANABELLE

Ah.

SEBASTIAN

Sorry to be a bummer.

ANABELLE

Not at all. Life often makes us experts in topics we'd prefer to know nothing about.

*A hot second.*

SEBASTIAN

I'm Sebastian, by the way. Sebastian the Intern.

ANABELLE

Pleased to meet you, Sebastian the Intern. I'm Anabelle the Anabelle.

A MYSTERIOUS VOICE

Awww! You're never tender to the interns.

ANABELLE

*(To SEBASTIAN)*

What was that?

SEBASTIAN

Just — it's nice to meet you.

A MYSTERIOUS VOICE

Though you are a bit stinky today, ducky. Is that pesto I detect on your // breath

ANABELLE

Did you hear that?

SEBASTIAN

Like the — tour group?

A MYSTERIOUS VOICE

A voice of sweet reason? Husky yet sensuous?

ANABELLE

No no in here.

SEBASTIAN

I don't think — Are you ok?

ANABELLE

Just uh too many hours in meetings. Probably dehydrated.

SEBASTIAN

*(A little weirded out)*

Um well. I've gotta finish my rounds.

ANABELLE

Please

SEBASTIAN

You sure you're ok?

ANABELLE

Make sure the uh dwarf lemurs don't get short-changed on their time.

SEBASTIAN

Bye, Cordelia!

*CORDELIA tilts her head a little. SEBASTIAN gives a little wave and exits.  
ANABELLE turns back to CORDELIA. They stare at each other for a long time.*

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE / CORDELIA

How long are you planning to stand there?

ANABELLE

Christ

CORDELIA

You look distraught. Would it be better, worse, or the same if I cranked up the magic realism?

ANABELLE

Just take a minute // take

CORDELIA

Take all the time you need there, ducky!

ANABELLE

Christ, why do you sound so much like Julie Andrews?!

CORDELIA

Why did *YOU* watch so much of *The Sound of Music* in your Youth Or Childhood, Anabelle?!

ANABELLE

—

You're some sort of demon?

CORDELIA

And this from a woman of science! Look, I'll make you a deal //

ANABELLE

This is where you ask for my soul, isn't it?

CORDELIA

Silly human! But in exchange for a hint, I would like: Five Large Craisin.

ANABELLE

Craisins?

CORDELIA

*(A polite correction)*

Craisin.

ANABELLE

I don't have any //

CORDELIA

Inner left jacket pocket.

*Inner.*

*ANABELLE pulls out a small pouch of Craisins.*

*CORDELIA*

Ambrosia!

ANABELLE

I'm giving you two up front. Then you tell me if you're a demon //

CORDELIA

Do you always haggle with "demons"?

ANABELLE

Are you?

CORDELIA

How about — *three* up front? Then *two* later?

*ANABELLE throws CORDELIA three Craisins.*

CORDELIA

I am my beloved's. And my beloved is mine, mine, mine.  
Oh — the sweetness!

ANABELLE

I'm not possessed //

CORDELIA

No, Anabelle! You're demented!

*A hot second.*

ANABELLE

Your mouth doesn't [move].

CORDELIA

On the scale of auditory hallucinations, I'm really quite a pleasant one!

ANABELLE

Oh god the doctors said //

CORDELIA

A bit abrupt, yes.

ANABELLE

How often is this going to happen?

CORDELIA

We have an agreement!

ANABELLE

How often is this going to //

*M enters. ANABELLE jumps at the sound of the door.*

M

Sup, doc.

ANABELLE

What?

M

Uhh. All ok? You look a little //

ANABELLE

I've been stuck in meetings six hours. That's enough to make anyone *look a little*.

M

— Someone else in here?

ANABELLE

You've just missed Sebastian the Intern.

M

He's disturbing you with earnest curiosity?

ANABELLE

On the contrary. How many tours do you have him giving?

M

Regular. One a week.

ANABELLE

Triple that. Put another intern on cleaning duty.

M

But it's his first semester //

ANABELLE

Humor me.

Alright, I'm off to interview more insufferable people for my job. And then two I like.

*ANABELLE starts to go.*

*CORDELIA gives a little screech and hold out her hand.*

ANABELLE

You drive a hard bargain.

*ANABELLE gives CORDELIA two more Craisins, then exits.*

## 9. NOVEMBER

*A few moments later.*

*SEBASTIAN sits in front of a wall of PVC piping. The pipes are hung almost like a honeycomb, with deep tunnels running back from each opening. If we can see what SEBASTIAN sees, maybe we notice a few dark bundles of fur, deep within the pipes.*

*M enters and sits next to SEBASTIAN.*

M

Peaceful, aren't they?

SEBASTIAN

Are they asleep?

M

Not today. Dwarf lemurs go into torpor for seven months, and their bodies cool to about sixty degrees Fahrenheit. Then, every once in a while, they warm themselves back up enough for their brains to shift into REM sleep.

SEBASTIAN

How can you tell when they're warm?

M

See those little collars?

—

And when they wake, they've used up all the stored fat in their tails. They're totally back to normal in ten minutes, scampering around like they didn't miss the whole winter. I get jealous of dwarf lemurs, sometimes.

SEBASTIAN

You like to sleep?

M

I could barely get out of my bed for a few months last year, so — kindred spirits.

SEBASTIAN

I bet you have a cool house. With like — *a pool table.*

M

It's an apartment, but thanks for your vote of confidence!  
You're chilling with your Nana this year, right?

SEBASTIAN

How'd you know that?

M

She's your emergency contact. I got forms, shortie, remember?

SEBASTIAN

I didn't think you read those.

M

I read everything.

Speaking of omniscience, we're upping your tours.

*SEBASTIAN wants to freak up, but he doesn't want to wake the lemurs!  
Can he even wake hibernating lemurs?*

SEBASTIAN

*(A very excited whisper)*

Really?

M

Do I joke? Besides, the moms are loving your energy. Everyone on your tour is buying like 500 pairs of lemurs socks on their way out the gift shop.

SEBASTIAN

WE!— we sell lemur socks?

M

That's what I said.

—

We should give these little critters their space.

SEBASTIAN

Ok.

*M holds the door for SEBASTIAN, who exits.  
Then, to herself:*

M

Maybe I *should* buy a pool table.

## 10. FIVE YEARS AGO

*Ranomafana National Park in Eastern Madagascar.  
The inside of a tent.*

*REAGAN and MIRIAM are cuddled up together in sleeping bags.  
REAGAN wears MIRIAM's flannel from the first flashback.  
The sound of rain falling outside.*

REAGAN  
Wanna be little spoon?

MIRIAM  
Stay right where you are.

REAGAN  
M'kay

*A cool minute. MIRIAM peaks over REAGAN's shoulder.*

MIRIAM  
Actually —

REAGAN  
Ugghh come here. Lemme cozy up to this ass.

MIRIAM  
You're just after my sleeping pad!

REAGAN  
You have no idea what I'm after.

MIRIAM  
I do. Believe me.  
Hear that?

REAGAN  
Mmmm

*They listen to the rain. They snuggle.*

MIRIAM  
How would you feel if a lemur saw us fucking?

REAGAN  
Is there a lemur in this // tent?!

MIRIAM  
No no just in theory. Would it feel like the baby walked in?

REAGAN  
You hate babies

MIRIAM  
But would it feel like our future “I Heart 2 Moms” punk babies, who I *won't* hate?

REAGAN  
You — hate babies.

MIRIAM  
Or would you just say — ‘sup ya cheeky voyeur — and not care.

REAGAN  
I think  
With our lemurs at home in the Lab, like Tarragon or oh my god Cordelia //

MIRIAM  
Gross. They’re like aunties.

REAGAN  
But the lemurs here? I don’t really know their business  
They don’t really know my business

MIRIAM  
Yeah that’s right. That feels right.

*A warm second.*

MIRIAM (*cont'd*)  
What are you thinking about?

REAGAN  
How early I’ve gotta wake up for my observation shift.

MIRIAM  
You’re down by the stream tomorrow?

REAGAN  
Yerp.  
(*with a sense of obligation*)  
What are *you* thinking about?

MIRIAM  
Do — do you wish you’d taken the teaching job at Cornell?

REAGAN  
Only when I have to get up at the buttcrack of dawn  
Go count how many bamboo lemurs drink from a stream //

MIRIAM  
I'm serious.

REAGAN  
Then no.

MIRIAM  
Really?

REAGAN  
I too am very serious, and I seriously wanted to spend this year in Madagascar.  
With Anabelle. With you. Mostly with you. Alright?

*A cool second.*

MIRIAM  
Is it different here than you expected?

REAGAN  
Cozied up to this ass?

MIRIAM  
In *Madagascar*.

REAGAN  
Versus last time?

MIRIAM  
Besides not freezing our tits off, yeah.

REAGAN  
Ohhh is that what happened to yours?

MIRIAM  
Wowww! // wow wow

REAGAN  
See that's another reason I didn't go to Cornell: had to protect your lil kumquats from the frost.

MIRIAM  
Here I am tryna have a heart to heart //

REAGAN  
Come here, woman //

MIRIAM  
And all I get in return is *scorn!*

REAGAN

You know I celebrate your tiny // little

MIRIAM

Scorn! Perhaps I should retreat into the loving embrace of another // hm?

REAGAN

Ok

MIRIAM

Of Nina, perhaps!

REAGAN

Whatever.

MIRIAM

Oh ho, she strikes a nerve!

REAGAN

Time for bed.

MIRIAM

I'm not *entirely* blind.

REAGAN

What's that mean?

MIRIAM

She's a babe!

REAGAN

Is she?

MIRIAM

Come on that's not an accusation, it's just //

REAGAN

She's straight.

MIRIAM

Then why are your hands getting so clammy, huh? Is your heart racing // pitter pat?

REAGAN

Cause I don't wanna talk about this.

MIRIAM

You think I don't love when other people are jealous of us?

REAGAN  
Can you //

MIRIAM  
When other people dream about //

REAGAN  
Stop!

*A very cold minute. REAGAN pulls away from MIRIAM.*

MIRIAM  
Guppy. Guppy.  
What wrong?

REAGAN  
I'm sorry.

MIRIAM  
No, I teased too hard. You don't have anything to //

REAGAN  
I think we need to have experiences with other people.

MIRIAM  
(*Laughing, relieved*)  
Oh! Is that what's been bothering you?

REAGAN  
That's // not

MIRIAM  
You wanna bring in a special guest? By all // means

REAGAN  
No.  
See separate people. Separately.

MIRIAM  
What?

REAGAN  
This is not how I wanted to say it.

MIRIAM  
Wanted to — ? Why are you —

REAGAN  
We've just been together a long time.

Since college just in all that time there hasn't really been another  
Chance to be. With anyone else.

MIRIAM

But why are you doing this now?

REAGAN

Because I keep giving things up for you, Miriam!

MIRIAM

— Are you not.

Are you not getting something back, in return?

REAGAN

Of course I am.

MIRIAM

Guppy. Hey. Hey.

Look at me, my love. If you want — if you need to to sleep with other people //

REAGAN

I already did.

MIRIAM

Did what?

REAGAN

It just happened.

*A hot minute.*

MIRIAM

What //

REAGAN

That's what everyone says fuck it sounds

MIRIAM

Wh - When?

REAGAN

Just once.

MIRIAM

Is it someone I know? Is it //

REAGAN

No.

MIRIAM  
When?

REAGAN  
You don't have to //

MIRIAM  
I don't have to WHAT? Come on, I wanna hear I, I made popcorn for this shit.

REAGAN  
She was at the conference in Denver and

MIRIAM  
How long was it?

REAGAN  
We only met on the plane //

MIRIAM  
No no how long did it last? How many minutes?

REAGAN  
That's not //

MIRIAM  
I'm ready. I'm ready to calculate how much you fucked our whole lives  
Per minute you were FUCKING HER.

REAGAN  
We should talk about this in the morning.

MIRIMA  
You're kidding me right you're kidding? TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED.

REAGAN  
Her boyfriend had just agreed to an open relationship, so I knew it wasn't gonna be serious.

MIRIAM  
Wow. Wow. Did you kiss her or did she kiss you?

REAGAN  
Does it matter?

MIRIAM  
An open — did you not see what that was?

REAGAN  
Stop.

MIRIAM

That was Experimental Bingo for her!

REAGAN

Don't say that shit to me.

MIRIAM

That's a statement of fact!

REAGAN

It was a // mistake ok. I own that.

MIRIAM

You. You are weak.

REAGAN

I'm not trying to make excuses, but aren't you always proposing these, these radical models to incorporate our desires into the relationship //

MIRIAM

Which requires radical *trust*.

REAGAN

So if I'd gotten your *stamp of approval* and done the // exact same thing?

MIRIAM

This is not about my fucking approval, it's about the trust that we can *never get back now*

REAGAN

I didn't even realize I wanted this!

MIRIAM

Jesus fuck, can you hear that? Every word coming out of your mouth it's all a cliché.

REAGAN

I didn't want to hurt you.

MIRIAM

Can you hear that?

This is the same exact shit your dad said when he cheated on your mom!

*A blistering second.*

REAGAN

Don't.

MIRIAM

It's the same exact shit *my* dad said when he cheated on *my* mom.

REAGAN

*(trying to leave the tent)*

I can't //

MIRIAM

People talk about a smile is the universal language? No.

The shit that cheaters say when they cheat. *THAT* is the Universal Fucking Language.

REAGAN

I can't be in here with // you.

MIRIAM

That's the mirror, ok?

REAGAN

I don't want to see you like this.

MIRIAM

I didn't want to see you like this either, cause I wanted to fucking MARRY YOU!

REAGAN

—

What?

MIRIAM

In my bag, in the inside pocket there's a box of tampons.

Inside that, there's a smaller fucking box of tampons.

And inside that, there's a ring that belonged to my rich old Abuela.

REAGAN

You //

MIRIAM

I don't even believe in all that!

REAGAN

I know.

MIRIAM

Like we're supposed to feel grateful they finally let us in the club?!

But if that's what you needed, to spend my whole life with you?

I would have come out to all my cousins, you know

I would have ripped my own guts out and used them to decorate the chuppah

How much more did you need from me?

REAGAN

Nothing's changed.

MIRIAM

It broke.

REAGAN  
Nothing's. Changed.

MIRIAM  
No love is a choice, it's a choice and you promised you'd keep choosing me.

REAGAN  
Guppy, please.

MIRIAM  
No. No, I curse you.

REAGAN  
Don't //

MIRIAM  
Fuck this feels like a bad stupid movie, but I guess that's how  
That's how it goes, right? I curse you.

REAGAN  
Please.

MIRIAM  
That in five years, or ten years  
When you're alone, and maybe I am too  
You'll dream about this moment, and you'll know that today was the day  
When you poisoned us both. Everything that came after,  
All the deadness we did to ourselves and to others: It could have been avoided,  
It could have been avoided  
If you just found the discipline to keep showing me the person you could be  
Instead of the person you are.  
And no matter how ridiculous it sounds to anyone else.  
Or if they can understand what it felt like from the inside,  
I curse you to remember that we had it.  
You had it you had it you had it you fucking  
YOU HAD IT

*And the tent flies away.  
A ripping sound.  
And we're immediately in —*

**11. NOVEMBER**

*And now it's 4:30 PM, back on November 1st, at the LemurLab.  
ANABELLE is interviewing REAGAN.*

ANABELLE  
You had it, yes?  
—  
Reagan?

REAGAN  
I did, they said. If I uh wanted it.

ANABELLE  
And why did you turn down a second tenure track position to stay here?

REAGAN  
I was midway through a three-year study with collaborators.  
I didn't want to live in the Midwest. Obviously my personal life was —  
Sorry, this feels. I mean you know this.

ANABELLE  
The Hiring Committee asked for more details.

REAGAN  
Right

ANABELLE  
I assume you've already noticed,  
But this job requires the constant ability to humor people who are //

REAGAN  
Detail oriented?

ANABELLE  
Stupid, and also ignorant of their own stupidity.

REAGAN  
Ah.

ANABELLE  
Patience you're fully capable of, but perhaps not eager to call upon every day?

REAGAN  
You've managed.

ANABELLE  
Takes its toll. I resent how little time this job leaves for publishing.

REAGAN  
Hm

ANABELLE  
You see what a hard-ass curmudgeon I've grown into.

REAGAN  
Was that a change?

*ANABELLE spins her chair around. She's interviewing MIRIAM now.*

MIRIAM  
You're kidding, right?

ANABELLE  
There's a list of questions I have to ask everyone.

MIRIAM  
Ok well. I navigated a conflict with a co-worker — with my boss, in fact — when she was crashing in my apartment after //

ANABELLE  
Miriam.

MIRIAM  
She refused to turn the heat down, but after weeks of covert thermostat adjustment, we finally compromised on 76.

ANABELLE  
You're not taking this seriously.

MIRIAM  
Well asking me to do a screening interview is insulting!

ANABELLE  
There's a committee //

MIRIAM  
Composed entirely of people who know me!  
If I'm not the right person for the job, or if they want fresh blood, by all means.

ANABELLE  
Why are you taking this so personally?

MIRIAM  
*Respectfully*, I can't imagine anything I say in the next fifteen minutes is going to be more pertinent than fourteen years of my work. Or am I wrong about that?

*ANABELLE spins back to REAGAN.*

REAGAN

Do you think there's flexibility?

ANABELLE

For time balance with research?

REAGAN

Or in the field

ANABELLE

If you were Joe Schmo from Princeton, I'd say sure. But —

REAGAN

Not really?

ANABELLE

You'll always be pinch hitting on grant writing, trying to hire a new vet tech with a week's notice, going to naming ceremonies for donors to christen baby sifakas //

REAGAN

When you put it like that, no wonder you've had 300 applicants.

ANABELLE

Can't say I didn't warn you.

*ANABELLE spins back to MIRIAM.*

ANABELLE

You speak four languages, yes?

MIRIAM

Fluently? Five.

ANABELLE

English Spanish Malagasy French?

MIRIAM

Hebrew. How your brain's doing?

ANABELLE

Not your interview.

MIRIAM

Isn't it?

ANABELLE

Next question:

Besides being a relentless smart-ass, what's your greatest weakness as a leader?

*ANABELLE spins back to REAGAN.*

REAGAN  
Probably I'm  
Overly-ambitious about taking on new commitments?

ANABELLE  
You bite off more than you can chew?

REAGAN  
No, I bite off a lot then I don't really sleep.

*ANABELLE spins back to MIRIAM.*

ANABELLE  
So education would be your top priority?

MIRIAM  
But adaptive education. Interactive. Students aren't gonna get revved up about evolutionary biology until you tell them why they should give a shit.

ANABELLE  
Revved up?

MIRIAM  
You wouldn't believe how well these "young people" respond to humans, talking like humans.

ANABELLE  
And how would you secure additional funding?

MIRIAM  
You're worried I couldn't?

ANABELLE  
On the contrary. But sometimes I'm curious how you pull it off.

MIRIAM  
Free drinks. Stories about poor kids becoming doctors.  
And convincing rich, boring men that I love capitalism.

*ANABELLE spins back to REAGAN.  
A chorus of lemur cries begins to underscore the scene.  
The noises slowly crescendo —*

REAGAN  
Can I ask how the other applicants have been?

ANABELLE  
Very illustrious. Mostly they know nothing about lemurs and have horrendous taste in shoes.

REAGAN

Are you considering anyone else — internally?

ANABELLE

If I hire Miriam, will you quit?

REAGAN

Half the Board will, given her track record with diplomacy.

*ANABELLE spins to MIRIAM.*

ANABELLE

If I hire Reagan, will you quit?

MIRIAM

Candidly, I can't imagine anyone who would hate this job more.  
All the schmoozing and fundraising?

*ANABELLE spins back to REAGAN.*

REAGAN

That's just my opinion, obviously.

*ANABELLE spins back to MIRIAM.*

MIRIAM

Off the record, of course.

*ANABELLE spins back to REAGAN.*

REAGAN

But I should know. And I think

*ANABELLE spins back to MIRIAM*

MIRIAM

she'd be

REAGAN & MIRIAM

an absolutely terrible choice.

*A cacophony of horrible screeches!*

***INTERMISSION***

**12. JANUARY**

*Time passes.*

*The chatter of CORDELIA perched in the sun, giving herself a nice little groom. It's January 1st. The Lab is all quiet.*

*ANABELLE walks in with a food bowl, wearing a winter jacket and scarf. She looks tired.*

ANABELLE

Happy new year, you old queen.  
Hungry today?

*ANABELLE drops off the food and stares long at CORDELIA. Nothing unusual. ANABELLE breathes a sigh of -*

CORDELIA

Waiting for me to fill the silence?

ANABELLE

Shit.

CORDELIA

C'est moi!

*ANABELLE ignores her.*

CORDELIA

Did you miss me like this?

ANABELLE

My doctor said not to engage with you.

CORDELIA

Oh that's the tone you're going to take?

In that case, I'll thank you to leave me be! I've important decisions to attend to.

*ANABELLE checks a spot on CORDELIA's back.*

ANABELLE

Do hallucinations set resolutions?

CORDELIA

I would never presume to speak for others.

ANABELLE

What kind of decisions? — Cordelia?

CORDELIA  
Thought you weren't supposed to engage?

ANABELLE  
I'm not.

CORDELIA  
Maybe I don't wish to engage with *you*.

ANABELLE  
Well that's revolting: my own brain playing hard to get with itself.

*Over the next few lines, MIRIAM enters behind ANABELLE's back.  
We see her through the glass of the enclosure, but ANABELLE does not.*

*MIRIAM almost calls out, but she stops, horrified, when she notices that  
ANABELLE seems to be deep in one-sided conversation with a lemur.*

CORDELIA  
Very well. I shall trust you as my counselor.

ANABELLE  
What's the uh issue at hand?

CORDELIA  
Succession.

ANABELLE  
Did you say //

CORDELIA  
The rising queen, to lead the troop when I am no more.

ANABELLE  
You know?

CORDELIA  
Of course. Besides, *you* know.

ANABELLE  
Ah.

CORDELIA  
See how that works?

ANABELLE  
You won't be the one to choose though.

CORDELIA  
Pardon?

ANABELLE  
Offspring won't automatically assume your rank. And most of the fighting among the other females won't take place until after you — depart.

CORDELIA  
Are you humansplaining my own death to me?

ANABELLE  
Just sharing expertise.

CORDELIA  
That's a lot of cheek from someone who couldn't keep her *own* offspring alive.

ANABELLE  
That's not —

CORDELIA  
Sorry, ducky. A low blow, as they say. Your little one was lovely, far as I could tell.

ANABELLE  
Cuter than someone with my genes had a right to be.

CORDELIA  
Remind me her name? Some years since the fire now, and in my old age //

ANABELLE  
Dian

CORDELIA  
Ah yes, Cordelia and Dian: on our birthday cake!

ANABELLE  
She didn't like that your name was so much bigger than hers.

CORDELIA  
Is that why she called me — what was it — Honeybunch?

ANABELLE  
Wish I'd asked.

CORDELIA  
No expert in spelling, I, but Honeybunch seems much the same length as Cordelia?

ANABELLE  
Kids name what they love.

CORDELIA  
Tis a game of your littles?

ANABELLE  
Gives them some measure of control, as they're getting to know the world.

CORDELIA  
She was very like you, in certain ways.

*MIRIAM slips out, still unseen by ANABELLE.*

ANABELLE  
Who will you favor? Desdemona?

CORDELIA  
She's the most assertive, surely. Strong fighter, plenty of heft behind her lunges.

ANABELLE  
No tolerance for invaders on her sunning branch.

CORDELIA  
*(rubbing her side)*  
Yes, bit of a sore subject, that.

ANABELLE  
I heard.

CORDELIA  
I'm no tyrant, but you can't let those little infractions go too far. Soon, it starts bleeding over into feeding priority, and next thing, you've a full-blown coup on your hands!

ANABELLE  
She'd certainly keep the troop in order. Though Livinia has stronger coalitions, perhaps.

CORDELIA  
More support from my nobles?

ANABELLE  
Humbly, from an outside perspective —

CORDELIA  
Yes?

ANABELLE  
63% of her agonistic behaviors were coordinated with a younger female.

CORDELIA  
You find a lot of solace in analytics, don't you ducky?

ANABELLE  
Doubt I can see myself that clearly anymore.

*ANABELLE turns to go.*

CORDELIA  
I wondered —

ANABELLE  
Are you after Craisins again?

CORDELIA  
*(A polite correction)*  
Craisin. No. Though I would not refuse if you offered.

ANABELLE  
*(taking out a small bag of Craisins)*  
Don't spoil your appetite.

CORDELIA  
Oh, the sweetness!

*CORDELIA nibbles away happily.*

CORDELIA  
Whdyoalsy //

ANABELLE  
Chew first.

*CORDELIA rolls her eyes and finishes chewing.*

CORDELIA  
I wondered: Why do you always visit on the first day of this cold month?  
When the other humans are missing?

ANABELLE  
Ah, well most humans sleep quite late on this particular morning //

CORDELIA  
They burrow with their troop, to preserve heat?

ANABELLE  
Something like that. They spend the day with their families  
Their lovers  
The stupor of their own throbbing heads

CORDELIA  
What about *your* head?

ANABELLE

That's uh a place I'd rather not spend too much time, right now.

I

—

Ugh — sorry.

CORDELIA

—

Do you need me to lick the water from your eye?

ANABELLE

No no — but that's

That's — very kind of you, little one.

CORDELIA

Don't fear. I quite enjoy the rain.

*MIRIAM walks into the enclosure. ANABELLE tries to compose herself.*

ANABELLE

Well hello.

MIRIAM

Sorry I //

ANABELLE

Fine. You're fine.

It's a holiday, you know.

MIRIAM

So they tell me. I was just

Uh honoring an old superstition.

ANABELLE

Oh?

MIRIAM

The First sets the tone for the year ahead.

So I made a point to come in and collect these samples of poo.

*She holds up a cluster of tiger tubes.*

ANABELLE

You look suspiciously composed for New Year's Day.

MIRIAM

Sobriety'll do that to a girl.

ANABELLE

Today sets the tone, or so I hear.  
This looks good on you.

MIRIAM

*(Trying to imitate an NC accent)*

Aw shacks.

—

Wasn't expecting anyone to be here.

ANABELLE

I never leave, so I don't count.

MIRIAM

That's how it works?

ANABELLE

Part of the decor. Like a ghost in a haunted house.

MIRIAM

Cow ghost?

ANABELLE

Exactly.

MIRIAM

Sorry, were you um praying?

ANABELLE

Praying?

MIRIAM

Before. I heard your voice.

ANABELLE

Only person who prays less than me is you.

MIRIAM

But I could //

ANABELLE

Here, let me log these. You should get back to seasonal laziness.

MIRIAM

It's fine //

ANABELLE

I insist. Go — frolic. You're a woman in your prime.  
All ok?

MIRIAM

Sure sure.  
Are *you* ok?

ANABELLE

Steady as she goes. See you Monday.

*Lights down on the Lab. MIRIAM walks outside.  
She pulls out her phone. She considers for a second.  
She puts her phone away.  
After a few seconds, she dials.*

MIRIAM

Hey it's me.

Um.

Sorry, did I wake you? —

Yeah, that's why I called—

So, there's not really a great way to say this,  
but I think I just watched Anabelle have a debate with a lemur.

**13. JANUARY**

*A few hours later.  
MIRIAM & REAGAN are sitting up in REAGAN's bed.  
No monogram pillows anymore.*

*They're both undressed, with hair sweaty.  
Comforter tangled up. A long moment, then —*

MIRIAM  
Did you know this was gonna happen?

REAGAN  
What makes you think //

MIRIAM  
Your bra.  
Matched your underwear.

REAGAN  
*(Laughing to herself)*  
Y'know, that's one thing I liked about dating men for a while.  
Getting away with that shit.

MIRIAM  
They don't notice A-team vs B-team panties?

REAGAN  
Not really. Eh — the good ones might.

*MIRIAM rolls over, revealing a cute, sensible pair of underwear.*

REAGAN *(cont'd)*  
You upgraded too. Lace, no visible holes —

MIRIAM  
Respectable Bs, yeah?

REAGAN  
B-plus even.

MIRIAM  
What can I say. Everyday panty dignity is the difference between twenty and thirty.

REAGAN  
So. Do you  
Wanna talk about any of that?

MIRIAM

Not really.

REAGAN  
You sure?

MIRIAM  
You're doing the little eyebrow thing, and it's very judgmental.

REAGAN  
Judgemental?

MIRIAM  
Yeah.

*MIRIAM starts getting dressed.*

REAGAN  
Well if you didn't wanna be "judged"  
Maybe you shoulda just gone to deal with your own feelings at home //

MIRIAM  
You asked if Anabelle // was OK

REAGAN  
Instead of waking me up hysterical, rolling over here at 10 in the morning on New Year's Day //

MIRIAM  
Which *would* be fair, but you *told me to come*.

REAGAN  
Well you shouldn't have kissed me.

MIRIAM  
A very chaste kiss, which you quickly escalated // into

REAGAN  
Fine. Here's what we're gonna do. Look me in my eyes for sixty seconds.

MIRIAM  
Is this some new age //

REAGAN  
I'm offering you a free undo.

MIRIAM  
Don't be // like

REAGAN

What? If sixty seconds go by and you wanna take the undo,  
Grab your shit and get out of my house and we'll pretend this didn't happen.

MIRIAM

That's not how //

REAGAN

Why not? Cause our relationship is so functional now?  
But if you stay, I'm gonna — you know, we're gonna fight for this. Finally. Like adults.

*A hot second.*

MIRIAM

My counselor says this isn't a good time to //

REAGAN

Probably should have considered that before.

MIRIAM

Where is this coming from?

REAGAN

From I got another job offer.

*A hot second.*

MIRIAM

The //

REAGAN

Not the Lab. In New York again.

MIRIAM

Fancy.

REAGAN

Don't get too excited for me, k?

MIRIAM

What do you want Reagan // balloons?

REAGAN

You're such a little brat sometimes, you know that?

MIRIAM

CONGRATULATIONS! Go live your truth ok! Go live // your best life!

REAGAN

I don't FUCKING

know though what that is and

If I keep staying here, I need to understand why.

That's what *I need* okay?

Either way, it's gotta be better than all this ambiguity and —

MIRIAM

You sure about that?

REAGAN

Yes. Yes. We need to nurse it back into something.

Something. Or we need to kill it.

So please just give me 60 fucking seconds. Just give me that. Ok?

*They stare at each other.*

*Whatever happens happens.*

*But it's incredibly painful for both of them.*

*And it lasts exactly a minute.*

*REAGAN gets to a point where she thinks MIRIAM is going to stay.*

MIRIAM

I can't.

—

I can't with this again.

*And the bed flips. Or it swallows REAGAN through the center.*

*The light goes green.*

—

—

—

*Insomnia.*

MIRIAM

Every morning, for the rest of the winter

I wake up at 4 o'clock in the morning

with the sick green glow from the clock blinking over my hand

REAGAN

I take my uh

phone off the charger to check the time, and instead, I end up googling

"how do you stop loving someone who is making me sick?"

But the algorithm misunderstands, it thinks *you're* sick,

which is frankly also true.

MIRIAM

I read half-way through the '11 signs I am falling in love, according to science'

I look up 'warning signs of addiction relapse'

1 Am I considering returning to the object of my addiction you bet baby

I am 2 angry, 3 moody, and 4 erratic in my eating patterns.

I ate a peanut butter and salmon sandwich before bed, in bed

so yup

I'm singing the *body* erratic

Am I 5 having trouble sleeping hmm well well it's uh 4:15 in the morning and I'm on  
AmericanAddictionCenters dot O.R.G. so what do you think you dumbfuck

*MIRIAM coughs. She coughs so hard that she starts to gag.*

REAGAN

In my dreams, you can fit your whole tongue inside my ear that's amazing

And you whisper

"It will be ok but it will hurt a little, let me numb you first"

Something else I can't remember

MIRIAM

Next night, I dream the same dream in a new language.

Maybe in another tongue

REAGAN

You're sleeping inside of my bed now // did you know that?

MIRIAM

Did you know that I dream in different languages, but never at the same time?

You're holding sharp little springs that attach to my wrists

Only my eyes can move and my pupils are dilating so wide, they're fuck

They're breaking my eyes apart

They keep growing wide and high

Please stop

Please high HIGH

**14. MARCH**

*The nightmare breaks. Time has passed.*

*MIRIAM is sitting in her lab, in front of a centrifuge.  
She's playing with the top of a serum separator tube. She looks like hell.*

*SEBASTIAN pops into the lab.  
His outfit is a little darker and more subdued than usual.*

SEBASTIAN  
Hi!

MIRIAM  
Can I help — Oh, hi Sebastian. New look?

SEBASTIAN  
Ready for the bright lights?

MIRIAM  
Right, you emailed about um —

SEBASTIAN  
LemurCam: March Madness Edition!

MIRIAM  
That's right. Right.

SEBASTIAN  
Your public misses you! Though I know you've had a lot on your plate.

MIRIAM  
We both have. How's your family // been

SEBASTIAN  
*(Ignoring the question)*  
We can get back on our weekly schedule now!

MIRIAM  
Well uhh. You've been doing a great job with the the  
Wow, words?

SEBASTIAN  
The Instagram?

MIRIAM  
Thats the one. That is what they call it.

SEBASTIAN

Is this — still a good time?

MIRIAM

Umm maybe //

SEBASTIAN

Whoa, is that a centrifuge? Jello density lab never forget! Do you mind if I record this?

MIRIAM

Maybe today isn't uh

SEBASTIAN

Just one take?

MIRIAM

This isn't particularly glamorous.

SEBASTIAN

It's actually so cool! The hum is very soothing. And normally — I don't mean to —  
*(Confiding)*

Listen, all the lemurs are inside with the Saharan Dust Cloud,  
Social engagement plummeted in the second half of February,  
And I really just wanna meet my commitment to double the Lab's followers before //

MIRIAM

Ok. Sure, if we can make it quick.

SEBASTIAN

Thank you! I promise I'll only bother you as long as the centrifuge has left to spin.  
Let me just get the shot — set up

MIRIAM

What's this for?

*MIRIAM half-heartedly blots the oil off her face with her sleeve.*

SEBASTIAN

It's for our new email newsletter: LemurBeliever!  
Christmas content went viral, so we're 51 thousand subscribers, and counting!

MIRIAM

Wow, that's so much — Belief.

SEBASTIAN

Obviously we can do as many takes as you'd like //

MIRIAM

Just. Heavy on the centrifuge, ok?

SEBASTIAN

Roger. And  
We are ready to roll. We're rolling.

—

Hey there, LemurBelievers!  
I'm here with Doctor Miriam. Adina. Baumstein,  
One of LemurLab's Associate Directors and your favorite guide to all // things

MIRIAM

Can we skip this part?

SEBASTIAN

Oh um sure. The magic of editing!  
I'm here in the lab with Doctor Miriam.  
So, what kind of research are you focused on today?

MIRIAM

*(A totally different person)*

Hey Sebastian!

Well most of my personal research, as you know, is focused around lemur hormones,  
and how their fluctuations over time can affect patterns of behavior.

Recently, I've been studying neuroendocrine — especially androgen — variation  
in various lemur species that exhibit female social dominance,  
and I'm especially curious to learn more about the hormonal changes  
that occur for lemur moms during pregnancy.

SEBASTIAN

What's going on over here?

MIRIAM

Well. *As you can see*, I'm working with a centrifuge. And a centrifuge is a device that we use to  
spin mostly liquid samples at high speed and separate them into bands of lower and higher  
density material.

SEBASTIAN

What will that separation reveal?

MIRIAM

Well, inside the centrifuge, I have a number of serum separator tubes  
That are full of a special gel and um  
Lemur blood

SEBASTIAN

Cut.

Do you think maybe we could cut the blood for now and talk more about lemur pregnancy?

MIRIAM

That is definitely a possibility, but maybe. Not today.

*M enters.*

M  
Meer can you — sorry, you're in the middle of recording // something.

MIRIAM  
(*Desperate*)  
Oh we're um wrapping it up.

M  
Believer in Chief! Welcome back. Bring it in!

*M and SEBASTIAN do a tiny handshake.*

M  
(*Clucking Miriam's face*)  
Were you in staff meeting this morning?

MIRIAM  
I uh —

SEBASTIAN  
While you're waiting on the centrifuge, do you think we could go over some possible posts?  
For example, if an aye-aye could create a work-out playlist //

M  
Actually! Perfect coincidence I ran into you.  
I'm about to start training a mouse lemur to use a touch screen.

*SEBASTIAN audibly gasps.*

M  
Solid content, mayhaps?

SEBASTIAN  
Words cannot even

M  
How 'bout you take an early lunch, meet me at the enclosure around 12:30?

SEBASTIAN  
Thank you, InstaGods!

M  
—  
See you there.

SEBASTIAN  
Right. Feel better, Miriam!

MIRIAM

Sorry you caught me on a [bad day]  
Yeah. Enjoy your lunch.

*SEBASTIAN departs.*

MIRIAM

Bless you, good good human.

M

That's the good one, over there. Want me to grab you a coffee?

MIRIAM

That bad?

M

You just look like a little — recently poisoned.

MIRIAM

Ughhh my eyeballs hurt

M

They're announcing the directorship pretty soon, that must // be

MIRIAM

It's not. That.

M

Maybe you should take a few days for yourself.

MIRIAM

You know what's wild? I get more stressed on vacation, I get these these headaches //

M

I think that happens to a lot of // people.

MIRIAM

Are their headaches like a force of death that perches on the pillow as they sleep?!

M

— You.

Need to go wash your face.

MIRIAM

My face?

M

I know you're technically my boss, but It isn't good for her to see you like this.

MIRIAM  
Who?

M  
“Who?” Stop.

MIRIAM  
I need to finish //

M  
I’ll watch your blood. Go.

MIRIAM  
I really owe you one.

M  
Yeah yeah.  
Hey, Meer.

MIRIAM  
Yeah?

M  
You’re a maniac, but I hope you get it.

*MIRIAM exits. A second later, SEBASTIAN re-enters, quietly.*

SEBASTIAN  
Sorry, indoor enclosure outdoor enclosure?

M  
Indoor. Screen glare.

SEBASTIAN  
Was she OK?

M  
I’m more curious to hear how — some others are doing today?

SEBASTIAN  
Not —  
I mean, functional.

M  
You’re a good actor.

SEBASTIAN  
Some of the time. Maybe.

M

I would expect no less.

SEBASTIAN

It's mostly for my Nana.

M

Ya'll taking shifts? Like she gets to break down on Monday, and you hold it together. And then you get to break down on Wednesday, and she's basically functional?

SEBASTIAN

She doesn't really like me to, you know, see her cry too much.

So I've been trying not to

Um

—

It's just hard to watch the rest of the world going on with Normal.

M

How dare they, right?

SEBASTIAN

It. I dunno it makes me feel like

Like my dad wasn't important? In the big picture of

Like obviously to me. But not

M

Well listen, we are all lookin' messy in this lab today ooof.

No Normal here!

*A warm second.*

SEBASTIAN

Everyone keeps saying it's gonna get easier.

M

Oh yeah. Makes you wanna punch 'em in the face, sometimes.

SEBASTIAN

I know people are just doing their best to say something nice, but //

M

Some folks just aren't fluent in grief. Never learned how to conjugate it.

But you're in The Club now, so you gotta take pity on 'em.

SEBASTIAN

What's The Club?

M  
I'm so sorry to welcome you, Sebastian. But Welcome  
To the Club of Half Orphans.

SEBASTIAN  
This isn't like a real //

M  
Nah. But here in the world's saddest and most metaphorical club,  
Nobody is tryna speak to you in platitudes. You get your key already?

SEBASTIAN  
Not yet.

M  
Cool, then it's definitely in the mail. Once it arrives, I will give you the formal tour.  
There's a very haunted basement, but uh  
There are also some excellent reading nooks upstairs. Highly cozy.

SEBASTIAN  
*(A little mischievous)*  
Is there a handbook?

M  
There he is, y'all!

*SEBASTIAN laughs a little.*

M *(cont'd)*  
I mean first: you know how I feel about a handbook.  
But actually, it's tradition that the older members do the introduction for new arrivals

SEBASTIAN  
Why?

M  
Cause not that long ago, I was new here.  
And um  
On the pile of everything that fucking sucked about my dad dying.  
I'm grateful that I can at least be here to welcome you.  
Like someone was there to welcome me.  
And someday, all the sadness that is so heavy on you right now  
Will enable you to become the tour guide for someone else's hell  
And when you wish very desperately to comfort them  
You can at least say this dumb shit  
Instead of "sorry"  
And they will feel that you, on some small level, do get it.  
And um I'm here for whatever you need, ok?

SEBASTIAN

—

Can I give you a hug?

M

I would like that very much.

*A sweet hug. Two good hearts trying to get through a hard world.*

M

What'd you bring for lunch today?

SEBASTIAN

Sympathy leftovers.

M

Good ones?

SEBASTIAN

I'm so, so sick of casserole.

M

Fuck a casserole. We're about to hit that Pad Thai food cart, my treat.

SEBASTIAN

Really?

M

Do I joke?

SEBASTIAN

Not usually.

M

I do not. I'm a very serious person.

Alright. Noodles, here we //

*The centrifuge beeps. M laughs.*

Crap.

SEBASTIAN

What?

M

Wanna learn to unload a centrifuge?

**15. MARCH**

*MIRIAM emerges from the bathroom, face cleansed and a bit spaced out. Halfway down the hall, an office door opens, hitting MIRIAM. The door conceals her as ANABELLE and REAGAN walk out of the office, mid-conversation.*

REAGAN

So in terms of navigating conflict, with all the issues I brought up last time, I think you've made the right choice.

ANABELLE

Well thank you.

REAGAN

Was it close?

ANABELLE

—

How do you think she'll take it?

REAGAN

She'll whine and scream like a child who dropped her popsicle.

ANABELLE

That's a bit // harsh.

REAGAN

Objectively, then

She'll make it all about herself, for as long as humanly possible.

*A phone rings inside the office.*

ANABELLE

I need to //

REAGAN

Go go.

*ANABELLE closes her office door. MIRIAM and REAGAN are left staring right at each other. MIRIAM's nose is bleeding.*

REAGAN

Oh hey. Are you — ?

MIRIAM

Stupid.

REAGAN

Sorry how long have //

MIRIAM

Fuck you.

REAGAN

Ah. Well I um regret that you heard that.

But I also didn't say anything that I don't believe to be one hundred percent true // about the flaws in your character.

MIRIAM

One *hundred* percent?

FUCK. YOU.

REAGAN

That's exactly my // point.

MIRIAM

We promised each other

We'd never bring our shit into work.

REAGAN

Which is why I'm just talking about your glaring flaws as a *colleague*.

MIRIAM

Wow

REAGAN

And the reality of why you want this job.

MIRIAM

Wow why is that?

REAGAN

Stop // embarrassing yourself Miriam.

MIRIAM

WHY IS THAT? Because my personality is too //

REAGAN

This isn't about your personality, for once.

MIRIAM

You don't want this job either!

REAGAN

You're just not as good a scientist as you think you are!

MIRIAM

That's rich. Wow.

REAGAN

Your ethical protocol is a mess, the repeatability of your results //

MIRIAM

Well you just want to be Anabelle!

*A very hot second.*

REAGAN

What the fuck.

MIRIAM

You just want to be Anabelle. So you can pretend to have grown up into someone people love.

REAGAN

*(Very quietly)*

That's not.

MIRIAM

Really? I can't hear you?

REAGAN

THAT'S NOT //

*The lights shift. Real time stops.*

*MIRIAM turns and stalks towards REAGAN as she speaks.*

MIRIAM

Shhh. Just stay right there.

I'm going to want to remember this.

I'm going to think back to this moment hundreds of times over the next fifteen years.

Try to remember who started it.

If we drew blood. If your smell changed.

—

Ok.

*REAGAN slaps MIRIAM.*

*MIRIAM lunges at REAGAN. They circle each other.*

*They fight. Barely like humans.*

*The next minute should be abrupt and terrifying.*

*Some sections feels like capoeira.*

*Some sections feel like a bar fight.*

*A moment when it seems over.*

*REAGAN starts to walk away, but  
then she whips around and tackles MIRIAM to the floor.*

*They try to bite each other. They fight like they're trying to kill each other.  
They continue to wrestle:*

MIRIAM  
My arm you're breaking my //

REAGAN  
YOU'RE SICK

MIRIAM  
I LOVE YOU

REAGAN  
I LOVE YOU

MIRIAM  
I LOVE // YOU

REAGAN  
YOU SICK FUCK!

*They kiss passionately. Blood gets all over both of their faces.  
REAGAN pulls away abruptly.*

REAGAN  
Did you say something?

MIRIAM  
Yes. But I don't think you heard.

REAGAN  
—  
You were watching my throat like you wanted to rip it out.

MIRIAM  
That's not why I was watching your throat.

MIRIAM  
—  
It really did feel like this.

REAGAN  
Not when we were together.

MIRIAM  
But today?

REAGAN  
Yeah. Today, it did.  
Ready?

MIRIAM  
Ok.

*Back in real time.*

MIRIAM  
JUST STAY RIGHT THERE!

REAGAN  
Meer //

*ANABELLE comes tearing out of her office.  
NINA and M run in from different places, looking concerned.*

ANABELLE  
What the hell is going on out here?

MIRIAM  
I uh, the door. Just //

ANABELLE  
Why are bleeding?

REAGAN  
Put pressure //

MIRIAM  
DON'T TOUCH ME.

REAGAN  
THEN GET UP.  
GET THE FUCK UP AND STOP BLEEDING ALL OVER THE CARPET.

*A hot minute. It's so uncomfortable.  
SEBASTIAN runs in, breathing hard.*

SEBASTIAN  
Does someone need an ice pack?

**16. MARCH**

*The calm after the storm.  
Later that night. Everyone else has gone home.*

NINA  
Alright to lock up?

ANABELLE  
You stuck around late tonight.

NINA  
Seemed necessary.

ANABELLE  
Well  
Today was a parable about maintaining healthy distance  
Between the personal and professional.

NINA  
Is that what you've done?

ANABELLE  
You have a real talent for telling people they've been stupid.  
While also making them feel extraordinarily cared for.

—  
I remember telling M that, when we snatched you back from the financiers.  
A maneuver I could never quite pull off myself.

NINA  
—  
Big day tomorrow. Anything you need?

ANABELLE  
Bring in all your talents for diplomacy. Other than that, just get a good night's rest.

NINA  
Ok. Night.

ANABELLE  
Night.

*NINA exits.  
ANABELLE waits a few seconds, listening to NINA's footsteps fade.*

CORDELIA  
Penny for your thoughts.

ANABELLE

I'm starting to miss myself. Do you think anyone else will?

CORDELIA

Someone's getting melancholy!

ANABELLE

Well it's all a bit traumatic. Staring into the void of my own futility.

CORDELIA

Do you not have ample confidence in your heir?

ANABELLE

That's not the issue.

CORDELIA

Do you fear she will horde resources from the other members of the troop?

ANABELLE

No.

CORDELIA

Do you fear she will exceed you?

—

How many lemurs are there in the world, Anabelle? Versus how many humans?

ANABELLE

Too few of your kind and too many of mine.

CORDELIA

My point precisely! You get very discombobulated by this idea of not existing. Nothing close to *extinction*, mind. Just not existing on an individual basis. Is that A Human Thing or a You Thing?

ANABELLE

Humans. There are individual exceptions, but they're not —

CORDELIA

Hm?

ANABELLE

We don't tend to encourage those kinds of feelings.

CORDELIA

Well

Perhaps you should meditate upon the mantra I've composed for my morning sunbathe.

ANABELLE

Did you say mantra?

CORDELIA

Don't act so surprised. You had quite a Buddhist Stage back there, in the '70s. Alright. So first, I assume my position in the modified lotus squat.

ANABELLE

That's not //

CORDELIA

I quiet my mind. Embrace the sun with my palms. And then:

I will enfold myself over death like a warming branch.

WELCOME, DEATH

I will breathe death in like the flower musk of my mate's tail.

WELCOME, DEATH

I will gulp death down like a bag of sweetest Craisin, when it opens before me.

WELCOME, DEATH.

And then you repeat, about like thirty times!

ANABELLE

Glad that works for you.

CORDELIA

Are we trying?

ANABELLE

Nope

CORDELIA

What if you just *think* the word DEATH, to start off with?

From whence this look of contempt?

ANABELLE

What look?

CORDELIA

You always get crotchety when your glutes are tight!

Besides, if you're annoyed with me, you're annoyed with yourself!

ANABELLE

I really don't //

CORDELIA

Squat. They've all left.

ANABELLE

These slacks don't //

CORDELIA

*Squat!*

*ANABELLE double checks the corridor.  
They both go into lotus squat, with knees splayed wide.  
ANABELLE looks intensely uncomfortable.*

CORDELIA  
Is bliss washing over you?

ANABELLE  
No, but death's becoming more attractive by the second.

CORDELIA  
Chant together!

ANABELLE  
You're bullying me. I need to check your hormone levels.

CORDELIA  
You can check them later.

ANABELLE  
There's a you-know-what in it for you —

CORDELIA  
Is that your hesitation?

ANABELLE  
A delicious little //

CORDELIA  
Do you fear that speaking the holy name of Craisin holds you hostage to your body? Heightens your attachment to the world and to its pleasures?

ANABELLE  
It's not about Craisins.

CORDELIA  
But *other* pleasures?

ANABELLE  
Some of —  
You could say that.

CORDELIA  
It's only natural that we should miss our darlings. But fair is fair, and  
If our carcasses do not rot, and each tiny cell does not digest itself //

ANABELLE  
Can we not tonight?

CORDELIA

// and our flesh doesn't putrefy

Why? it's a miraculous journey!

If it doesn't putrefy into gas and salt and fling nitrogen into the soil,

Then how will the young trees grow Craisin for our offspring's offspring to eat?

ANABELLE

For *your* offspring.

CORDELIA

You're trying to change the subject.

ANABELLE

That's what compost is for.

CORDELIA

We get to be the compost!

ANABELLE

Besides, cranberries don't even grow on trees // they grow

CORDELIA

Whoa whoa wait. You have seen a wild Craisin?!?

ANABELLE

Yes. I took Dian to the Cape for her ninth birthday.

CORDELIA

You went on pilgrimage to the Craisin shrine?!

ANABELLE

Why don't you know this?

CORDELIA

Because some memories stay locked up in the basement of your mind

And hallucinations are very fickle!

ANABELLE

Oh I know!

CORDELIA

You wore a *cape*, you say, to honor them?

ANABELLE

We wore waders.

CORDELIA

What is a wader?

ANABELLE

A coverall. To wear in a bog.

CORDELIA

And a bog is the water?

ANABELLE

No — well, sometimes.

I always thought so, but it's actually a sandy field that gets flooded twice a year, from a river.

Once in the winter, so the ice will protect the cranberry vines.

And then once in the autumn — that seems too close together,  
but October's when we went. The farmers //

CORDELIA

These are the Craisin priests?

ANABELLE

Yes, in a, yes. They beat the plants with rakes or  
they're almost like massive egg beaters really  
until thousands of cranberries float to the top of the water

The farmers corral the berries before sucking them up.

And the whole bog looks like it's bleeding,  
but also like little toy boats bobbing in a bathtub.

Like the the whole river opened up its wrists in the bathtub.

But pink.

And peaceful.

CORDELIA

And that's when you pray to the Craisin?

ANABELLE

Yes. That's when you pray to them.

It. I need to take your blood sample.

CORDELIA

From where?

ANABELLE

Femur

CORDELIA

Do we have to?

ANABELLE

Yes.

CORDELIA  
I //

ANABELLE  
Please. We both need some sleep, Cordelia.

*A hot second.*

CORDELIA  
(*Extending her leg*)  
OK.

ANABELLE  
Thank you.

CORDELIA  
Be gentle.

*ANABELLE uses a syringe to draw blood from CORDELIA's femoral vessel.  
CORDELIA clenches her hands.  
ANABELLE'S movements are practiced, precise.  
CORDELIA relaxes.*

*A cool minute.*

CORDELIA  
Look! I'm a bog.

ANABELLE  
How do you mean, Honeybunch?

CORDELIA  
Cause I'm bleeding.  
But also: I'm peaceful.  
I'm peaceful.

**17. MAY**

*Time passes.*

*The warm sounds of a Carolina forest.  
Cicadas. Crickets. The rustle of trees in bloom.  
A single branch, flowering, hangs over the outdoor picnic table.*

*REAGAN is setting up a spread of food and drink.  
She's dressed in unseasonably dark, formal clothing.*

*MIRIAM walks in, dressed in dark blue and heels.*

MIRIAM  
Hi.

REAGAN  
Hey.  
—  
Heels?

MIRIAM  
Wanted to send her off right. Flair, y'know?

*A hot second.*

REAGAN  
How // was your time off?

MIRIAM  
Packing going ok?

REAGAN  
Sorry fine yeah. Had to part ways with some sentimental t-shirts.

MIRIAM  
Rubber Ducky Frida?

REAGAN  
Goodwill.

MIRIAM  
Brutal wow. Country Grammar?

REAGAN  
Nelly made the cut.  
Speaking of, I was about to pack this, but uh  
I think it belonged to you, once upon our youth.

*REAGAN holds up the flannel.*

MIRIAM  
Oh wow.

REAGAN  
Durable and, and enduringly  
— some would say stubbornly — stylish

MIRIAM  
Thought I lost you, soldier.

REAGAN  
No just uh regular old theft.  
Didn't want there to be any lingering debts between us.

*They both sort of laugh.*

MIRIAM  
You're gonna be a great professor.

REAGAN  
Nah.

MIRIAM  
You will.

REAGAN  
I could never translate it quite like you.  
We devote our whole lives to these strange little creatures, totally obsessed with them,  
And when somebody asks me why //

MIRIAM  
Eh. You know what you know.

*A hot minute.*

REAGAN  
If you ever want to come // sorry

MIRIAM  
I keep wanting to // sorry again

MIRIAM  
No no you

REAGAN  
I'm just uh probably gonna buy. A sleeper couch.

MIRIAM  
Like a futon, but for a grown ass woman?

REAGAN  
That couch will never see Cup 'O Noodles, all the days of her life.

MIRIAM

Yeah that's funny you say that cause I uh  
I need to fly up to New York on the 27th.

REAGAN

Are you  
Visiting someone?

MIRIAM

No, I mean  
Well maybe — But  
Primarily I'm going for an  
audition  
I'm going for an audition!

REAGAN

*(Very confused)*  
Like for a movie?

MIRIAM

Funny story: a producer saw my Instagram clips with Sebastian  
And we uh sent some other videos with script and

REAGAN

Are you serious?

MIRIAM

Basically, they want us to do a screen test for a kid's TV show.

REAGAN

Like a show that already exists? Or they're //

MIRIAM

A new one. It's insane, they wanna call it //

*NINA walks in. Immediate tension.*

NINA

Hey y'all

REAGAN

Hey.

*A hot minute.*

NINA

I brought some uh  
Potato salad.

REAGAN

Oh nice. Lemme clear a // spot.

NINA

No, I can — oh perfect thanks.

Have you been here long?

MIRIAM

Just a few minutes.

NINA

—

Are you totally crazy with packing?

REAGAN

I'm so sorry I meant to return your texts. You know how it // gets

NINA

No no //

REAGAN

You're like: I don't really have that much in my kitchen, right?

And then it's 20 hours consolidating all your half-used cinnamons into one cinnamon

NINA

Which peeler is the good peeler?

REAGAN

Should I throw out these mismatched spoons?

NINA

I never even liked this spoon!

REAGAN

I don't! Exactly yep.

—

And you must be crazy too, Madame Director.

NINA

It's been yeah I've just been getting a better sense of all the finances. That's the easy part.

Meeting donors. Thank you for suggesting that tapas spot, Meer //

MIRIAM

*(So cold)*

Bankers love a tiny meatball.

NINA

Oh my god. They yeah.

And croquettes? Please.

MIRIAM

You're among your own.

REAGAN

—

Don't think I ever got to say, right in the aftermath  
But I'm really happy for you.

NINA

You don't have to //

REAGAN

You see people's talents so clearly. You care.

NINA

Well — I mean, thank you.

It wasn't um

Definitely not what any of us were expecting.

MIRIAM

Nope.

NINA

—

This table looks so nice.

MIRIAM

All her.

REAGAN

Can't mourn on any empty stomach. You can, but you shouldn't.

NINA

Are people planning to speak, or //

REAGAN

If the spirit moves them. I might share a few memories from her younger days.

*M and SEBASTIAN enter, mid-conversation.*

*M is carrying a mug. SEBASTIAN wears his sparkle Converse.*

SEBASTIAN

So for Netflix or PBS. Or both. Maybe a co-pro //

M

Dang, ya'll look nice!

MIRIAM

We knew that queen a long ass time. Or — sorry, Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN

It's alright! I need to get used to the biz.

REAGAN

Did you B.Y.O. Mug?

M

Nerrr! As a matter of fact, this is first edition publicity swag  
Gifted to me by this fine young lad

SEBASTIAN

I made it for the audition video —

*M reveals their mug!*

SEBASTIAN

LemurBeliever!

EVERYONE

Oh my god / what the fuck / Believers! / too much, I love it / etc

MIRIAM

*(To REAGAN, smirking)*

Told you.

NINA

Alright y'all. This a solemn event. Let's bring it in.

SEBASTIAN

Do you always do this? When —

MIRIAM

No. But she she deserves it.

REAGAN

Hands?

—

Dearly beloved, we are gather here to celebrate a life well-lived  
A life spent //

ANABELLE

*(off stage)*

Fucking box! Can I get some help over here?

*M and REAGAN exit in the direction of ANABELLE's voice.*

NINA

Thought she couldn't make it?

MIRIAM  
News to me.

*ANABELLE walks in with a large, sealed box.  
REAGAN and M follow with a pitcher of lemonade, a tote bag, etc.*

ANABELLE  
You started without me?

MIRIAM  
We thought you were — indisposed.

ANABELLE  
Ah, well doctors gave me the all clear this morning.

M  
Were you not feeling //

ANABELLE  
Don't ask. I'm frail as a Clydesdale, and probably I smell like one too.  
But I had an important parcel to collect. Shall we?

*ANABELLE joins the circle.*

REAGAN  
Dearly beloved, we are gathered here to celebrate a life well-lived  
A life spent in the service of her troop and in the conservation of her species.  
Today, we gather to honor the memory of Cordelia  
Loving mother to Goneril, Edmund, Gloucester, France, Rainstorm, Fool, Foolie, and Eyeball.  
Loving grandmother to 25 pups.  
Who after these 27 years //

ANABELLE  
And a half.

REAGAN  
Who after these 27 years *and a half*  
Passes gently back to the land where she was born. May she rest in power. Amen.

EVERYONE  
Amen.

*A cool second.*

SEBASTIAN  
Dear Cordelia,  
Wherever you are, I just wanted you to know that  
The inspiration you've shared with us won't be forgotten  
And it will be passed to the next generation of scientists and just um

Regular kids who need to feel like it's okay to sparkle in a dull and grey world.  
Long live the Queen.

EVERYONE  
Long live the Queen!

NINA  
You wanna say something?

ANABELLE  
No. I've talked to her enough.

*The warm sounds of a Carolina forest.*

M  
—  
It's really hot out here, yeah?

MIRIAM  
*(taking off her heels)*  
Yeah, I'm dying //

NINA  
A/C before we eat?

SEBASTIAN  
Please.

*M, SEBASTIAN, NINA, and MIRIAM head inside.*

NINA  
*(Going off)*  
It's gonna be a long summer, y'all. Should not be this swampy yet, in May.

*And they're gone.  
ANABELLE and REAGAN stand looking out at the forest.*

ANABELLE  
She's still mad, isn't she?

REAGAN  
You know her. She takes everything personally.  
Though to be fair, this did feel kind of personal.

ANABELLE  
You haven't mentioned //

REAGAN  
Course not.

ANABELLE

And you still feel good about this decision?

REAGAN

I was very flattered. But I think I need to get out of the South for a minute.

ANABELLE

Good.

—

You acted surprised about the show?

REAGAN

What'd you actually send them?

ANABELLE

Just the clips. She really is fantastic on camera.  
Besides: it pays to have friends in public broadcasting.

REAGAN

—

What if she doesn't end up in New York?

ANABELLE

That's not my decision.

REAGAN

You said I got one question.

ANABELLE

Ray //

REAGAN

I saved it in the back of the fridge.

ANABELLE

—

Then tell her you love her.

REAGAN

And if that doesn't work?

ANABELLE

Say that before I lost my mind,  
It was my last dying wish to see you two together.  
Is that unfair?

REAGAN

Yeah.

ANABELLE

Eh. I leave it to you as an option.  
Alright, go mingle.

REAGAN

You coming?

ANABELLE

Just gazing at the kingdom one last time.

*REAGAN hugs ANABELLE and gives her a little peck on the cheek.  
REAGAN exits.*

*ANABELLE goes over to the cardboard box she carried in. She opens the top.  
The box is full of Craisins.*

*Tenderly, ANABELLE sprinkles a handful of Craisins on the ground.*

ANABELLE

Oh, the sweetness.

*The light changes.  
We can hear a chorus of lemurs, soft at first.*

*Something falls from the branch of the tree.  
It's a single, fresh cranberry.*

*and another.*

*and another.*

*ANABELLE looks up, high in the canopy.*

ANABELLE

That you, Honeybunch?

*Cranberries rain down upon her.*

*And she feels peaceful.*

*And she sees something that we cannot see.*

END OF PLAY