

The Anamorphosis

By

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## **Characters.**

**KIERAN**, a poet, a musician, a vagabond. A boy who loves too much but time is always against him.

**IRINA**, a girl shrouded in a shadowy gloom.

**SHERIFF BICKERS**, the face of authority in Tempe and this is something he takes pride in.

**CORA**, a woman once imbued with energy, a flower blossoming in the spring, but now she dresses in black, a mournful countenance upon her. She runs the saloon in the summer.

**THE MAESSEN GIRLS**, three recommended: a triad, a tricolon. The best things come in threes, after all. The Fates, the Furies, even the original Muses. If needed, could go to seven or even to nine. But no more, no less. Three, seven, or nine total (including Maessen Leader). Like in a Chorus, there is a **MAESSEN LEADER**, she always wears a jaguar pelt (faux please) and carries a thyrsus, the others wear fawn or fox pelt (again, faux). All are barefoot, all wear ivy-wreaths. One carries a tambourine. Any other Maessen Girl lines not spoken by the leader or otherwise specified can be divided up however the director sees fit.

## **Setting.**

Salt River Valley and the Town of Tempe, Arizona 1876.

**ACT ONE**

## SCENE I.

Though not yet visible to the audience, the stage is dressed with trees. Upstage there is a river, which could manifest in a backdrop or in sound effects. If a production wants to use flats, the river valley is surrounded by jagged cliffs.

A brazier ignites, illuminating the face of MAESSEN LEADER center stage. She tries to light a torch in the brazier, but it doesn't burn. Again, she tries. Still nothing. It hisses. A slight light emanates from it. Its embers smolder, and smoke pours out. Fervently, she shakes the torch, but still, it does not burn. Smoke continues to pour from the torch like it were a witch's cauldron, and Maessen Leader moves it away from her face, rubbing her eyes.

MAESSEN LEADER

The torch hisses with tearful smoke, and there are no flames to be found even when I shake it.

Maessen Leader beckons towards the wings.

MAESSEN LEADER (CONT'D)

Sisters, come! Look!

Enter the other MAESSEN GIRLS from different parts of the stage as the rest of the lights turn on. It is dusk. Maessen Girls creep towards their sister. Their movements are not haggard and witchy, per-say, but there is an eldritch quality about it. Think Midsommar: a duality of dark and light. The ecstasy and madness of youth intertwined with something far more chthonic brewing beneath the surface.

The Maessen Girls weave around the trees, peering through branches, and giggling as they move. But once they reach the Maessen Leader, they sober up, all laughter ceases. They lean in to inspect the torch.

## THE MAESSEN GIRLS

It's a bad omen.  
A bad omen indeed.

## MAESSEN LEADER

The weightless peoples and the phantoms of the dead, the bloodless souls beneath, now weep once more for a lover lost.

## THE MAESSEN GIRLS

Shame, this time, they never got to meet.

## MAESSEN LEADER

At least not as those among the upper breezes ought.

## THE MAESSEN GIRLS

It's a shame.  
A shame indeed.

## MAESSEN LEADER

But fear not, sisters, the gods' design cannot so easily be evaded. The strings of Fate are tangled, for time pressed on too fast for the old hags to keep up their spinning, but they are not torn.

From off-stage, the rhythmic clopping of hooves echoes, a horse moving at a rather slow yet persistent gait. A male voice hums a mindless tune, something akin to "I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen," by Thomas Westendorf, but with his own unique twist. Hearing it, the Maessen Leader's lips curl into a sinister smile.

## MAESSEN LEADER (CONT'D)

See, even now they weave, course altered but not abandoned. A shade unburied is stuck in the liminal space between life and death.  
The Fates will do their work.

The Maessen Girls start to smile as understanding dawns on them. Maessen Leader hums along to the tune and her sister start to dance around her, they laugh as Maessen Leader begins to sing the lyrics, though her tone has an edge of mocking.

## MAESSEN LEADER (CONT'D)

I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen  
 Across the ocean wild and wide  
 To where your heart has ever been  
 Since first you were my Bonnie bride.

MAESSEN GIRLS dance around the stage, laughing, and start to sing along.

## ALL MAESSENS

The roses all have left your cheek.  
 I've watched them fade away and die  
 Your voice is sad when e'er you speak  
 And tears bedim your loving eyes.

ALL MAESSENS exit stage left.

## SCENE II.

The humming and the hoof-beats grow louder. Enter KIERAN, leading his horse behind him. There is a guitar strapped over his shoulder, and a worn brown leather jacket is slung over his free arm.

Kieran ceases humming. With a sigh, he stops and loops the reins around the tree-trunk before grabbing his supplies from the saddle. There, he settles down next to the brazier as if it were a campfire and unpacks his bag, spreading out his sleeping sack and retrieving some dried meat. He slips into his jacket and gnaws on the jerky, before grabbing his guitar and messing around with cords. Unfortunately, I am tone deaf and don't know how to read music, so I do not know what Kieran is playing, but it's something good.

He plays for a minute or so alone. While he is distracted, IRINA enters, seemingly from the river itself. She is soaked, but still ethereal. Kieran does not notice her; she moves closer, entranced in by his melody. She places her hand on the tree, but the horse does not notice her presence.

## IRINA

Your music is lovely.

At the sound of her voice, Kieran nearly chokes on his jerky, startled.

KIERAN

Jesus—*fuck!*

Kieran turns to look at her. Even in her disheveled state, he is enthralled. He stares, mouth agape. Is it love at first sight? He's starting to think so. Irina steps towards him, a bit confused and concerned as to why he's looking at her so dumbly. She presses him further.

IRINA

Did you write the song yourself? I don't recognize it.

Kieran blinks, half-pulled from his stupor, and stutters.

KIERAN

Uh, yeah, it's just, uh, just something I'm toying around with.

(Beat. His brain needs a moment to process.)

Who are you? Why—why are you here? Oh, you're drenched. Come, sit by the fire. It'll thaw you right out. Take this—

Kieran beckons her towards the fire and strips off his jacket, handing it to her. Irina smiles and moves towards the brazier but does not accept the jacket. It's not a rude refusal, it's almost like she doesn't even think to take it. Kieran awkwardly puts it back on.

IRINA

Thank you.  
I'm terribly sorry if I scared you.  
My name's Irina.

KIERAN

It's alright.  
I'm, uh, Kieran.  
A pleasure to make your acquaintance.

Kieran outstretches a hand for Irina to shake, but her attention is elsewhere. She does not shake it. She looks to his horse, to his makeshift camp, and to his guitar.

IRINA

So, you're a musician, then?

Awkwardly once again, Kieran drops his hand, brushing off imagined dust from his jacket as if that were his intention the entire time. He clears his throat.

KIERAN

Something like that.

I write songs—

poems really, poems put to music.

And I travel around to different cities to play them, but it hasn't made me much of a living.

People sure do like to listen, but they're hard pressed to squander a few coins so I can sleep in a nice bed for once.

IRINA

But do you need to make money off it to still be considered a musician?

How few artists there would be in the world if that was the case...hell, you could probably count 'em on your fingers without much challenge, couldn't you?

You write songs, you said so yourself.

That makes you a musician.

Nice bed or no.

KIERAN

I suppose you're right.

IRINA

I like musicians.

I don't know why. I just always have. There's something familiar about them.

Something comforting.

My sisters would tease me about it. But they weren't much better themselves.

They love to dance, didn't even need a song. They'd just invent one in their minds and off they'd go.

I was never a good dancer.

Kieran laughs and Irina smiles at him.

KIERAN

If it makes you feel better, I'm not a very good dancer myself. I can make the rivers and the trees weep with music; I can make the coyotes howl and the jaguars saw but God forbid I make it through a two-step without breaking my partner's toes.

It's Irina's turn to laugh.

IRINA

Oh, the two-step! That's the only one I'm somewhat decent at!

KIERAN

Really?  
Can you show me?

IRINA

I need a partner, and I'd rather keep my toes intact thank you very much.  
I also don't really like it.  
Usually, I just throw my head back, so my throat is to the stars; I raise my arms, and I just...spin around mostly.

Irina demonstrates. The movements are eerily reminiscent of the Maessen Girl's, but lighter. Kieran laughs, and then he pulls out his guitar, playing something up-beat for her to dance along to. After a minute or so, she falls to the ground, breathless. Kieran applauds.

KIERAN

I'll give it to you. That was much better than the two-step.

Irina joins in on the laughter, still trying to catch her breath. Can she catch her breath? She doesn't know the rules yet.

KIERAN (CONT'D)

Irina, I got to ask you.  
What are you doing out here at this hour of the night?

Irina falls silent, contemplating.

IRINA

I needed to get away. For a moment at least. I needed a moment to breathe.

KIERAN

Get away from where?

IRINA

Tempe.

KIERAN

Tempe?



As Irina speaks, she gets more and more distant, staring out into nothing.

IRINA

Tempe, Arizona.

Only town around for miles. Just a couple upstream. Stay by the riverbank and you'll make it.

It's impossible to get lost.

And impossible to truly get away.

It follows you, like a shadow.

Gets stuck in your bloodstream and tightens around your chest until you can't breathe.

And then you're running through the brush hoping that the wind in your lungs will shake it loose. You're foolish. Just a foolish little girl.

But you'll learn.

Not even the river can wash you clean of that town.

Irina shakes her head, grounding herself back in reality.

IRINA (CONT'D)

Do yourself a favor, Kieran. Only stay in Tempe as long as necessary. Not a moment longer. Not so much as a breath longer.

Please.

Kieran doesn't quite know how to react. He stares at her for a moment, before nodding slowly.

KIERAN

Okay...

We should probably get some rest.

I—I have an extra blanket.

Kieran rifles through his bag and pulls out a quilted blanket. Then, he stands and walks around the brazier, laying it on the ground for Irina. She smiles, but it has an edge of melancholy. Not completely happy. But grateful.

IRINA

Thank you.

They both settle onto their blankets, laying down to sleep.

KIERAN

Of course.  
If you need anything, just let me know.  
Even if I'm asleep.  
Anything at all.

BLUE OUT.

SCENE III.

Still in blue-out. Brazier is barely burning any longer. Kieran sleeps and Irina sits beside him. After a moment, Irina stands and moves to exits stage right. She pauses for a moment, eyes lingering on Kieran, but finally pulls herself away. She exits. From off- stage left, as if from behind the jagged cliffs, the Maessen Girls scream and laugh, though the sound is muffled. It's a way's off. Lights up on Kieran. He starts, sitting up from his sleep, it's still dark, though. Midnight now.

KIERAN

Irina? Where are you?

Kieran throws off his blankets and stands, searching around the stage for her. He cannot find her. He grows panicked.

KIERAN (CONT'D)

Irina!

Still nothing.

KIERAN (CONT'D)

Maybe she went home? She must've gone home. Where else...

Kieran repeats Irina's words as student repeats his teacher's instructions.

KIERAN (CONT'D)

Just a couple miles upstream. Stay by the riverbank and you'll make it to Tempe. It's impossible to get lost.  
Why would she leave in the middle of the night, has she any sense at all?  
Impossible to get lost? Even in pitch black?

(Kieran turns towards his horse.)  
(MORE)

## KIERAN (CONT'D)

Fuck, what if something happened to her...she could've slipped...she could've been attacked by an animal or a mad man.

I should go after her. Yes, I need to go after her.

Kieran rushes to grab his supplies, shoving them into his bag, and unhitches his horse. They exit stage left.

## SCENE IV.

Enter Maessen Girls from all sides. Still, they laugh, still they dance, they whoop and cheer and scream. Let them dance around for a bit. Maessen Leader enters, arms crossed. She beckons her sisters towards the wings, and they sigh, not in unison but staggered as each notices. Sisters nudge each other to draw attention to Maessen Leader. All Maessens exit to the wings where they return with set pieces for Tempe. They set up the stage while they speak.

## MAESSEN LEADER

For some two and a half thousand years, again and again, they meet.  
Again and again, they love.

## MAESSEN GIRLS

In Greece

in Asia

In Africa

In Australia

Here, in Arizona. Forever in Tempe, the Fates have designed.  
Lifetime after lifetime.

## MAESSEN LEADER

Lifetime after lifetime,  
The inclined path is plucked through the mute silences,  
Steep, obscure, dense with shadowy gloom.  
They had not been far from the edge of the top of the earth,  
But, at this moment, fearing he'd fail and desperate to see her,  
The lover turned his greedy eyes. Immediately she fell back,  
And holding out her arms, and struggling to grasp and to be grasped,  
The unlucky one seizes nothing but the withdrawing breezes;  
And now, dying again, she did not complain about anything concerning her lover.

The Maessen Girls speak in unison.

## MAESSEN GIRLS

For what could she complain about except that she had been loved?

## MAESSEN LEADER

and she said her final "Farewell," which he could scarcely hear,  
and she was returned back again to the Avernus valleys.

## MAESSEN GIRLS

Lifetime after lifetime.

## MAESSEN LEADER

So, the Fates have willed it to be.  
But now: an error.

## MAESSEN GIRLS

The tangling of the threads.  
Old, wrinkled fingers could not keep up with their spindle.  
Quite a mess, they've created.

## MAESSEN LEADER

Quite a mess, indeed.  
Let us go, sisters, and witness how the world rights itself.

Maessen Leader grins. It's not a pleasant expression. Too wide, too many teeth.

## MAESSEN LEADER (CONT'D)

How entertaining it will be.

If more time is needed to set up the stage, Maessen Girls start humming "I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen" until it is finished. If no more time is needed, they hum simply as they exit stage left.

## SCENE V.

Lights up on Tempe. A dirt road runs through the center of town, buildings frame either side of it. Most are made of a gray-colored wood, though some do seem to have parts of it made up of brick. There's a saloon, a sheriff's station, as well as houses. A classic town in the Wild, Wild, West. You almost expect a tumbleweed to blow through.

Kieran enters stage right, quickly hitching his horse to the first post he sees. The only light comes from windows of the saloon, everything else is dark and closed. Kieran runs to the saloon and tries to open the door, but it doesn't budge. So, he bangs on it. No response. He bangs again.

KIERAN

Hello?!

He waits a moment, then raises his fist to knock again, but then the door swings open, revealing a disheveled CORA. The older woman has a robe tied tightly around her waist, she's visibly just woke up, and is obviously panicked.

CORA

What's happened? Did they find—

Cora finally notices that Kieran is not anyone from town. Her panic subsides to irritation.

CORA (CONT'D)

Are you mad, boy? Running into town screaming like this...you'll wake all my customers. Hell, you'll wake the whole town.

Kieran ignores her.

KIERAN

Has a girl come through here? Dark\*\* hair, white nightgown?

\*\*change the description based on the actress' hair color.

CORA

Oh, wonderful, you're drunk.

KIERAN

No, no...I'm not. I swear. Her name, it's Irina. I fell asleep for one moment and then she was gone...

Cora looks as if someone's slapped her and very much like she wants to shut the door in Kieran's face.

CORA

That's not funny.

KIERAN

I'm not trying to be? Please, ma'am, have you seen her?

CORA

I think you should leave.

KIERAN

What, why? Surely, she must've come through here. Only town around for miles, that's what she told me.

Though I'd figured that much.

CORA

You need to leave. This is a cruel, cruel trick boy.

KIERAN

But I'm telling you, it's not a trick. Irina approached me at the riverbank, told me how to find this here town, but she vanished on me in the middle of the night, and I just want to make sure she's alright.

Cora looks almost hopeful, as if she wants to believe him but something in her won't allow it.

CORA

If you're not drunk, and you're not fooling with me, you're certainly mad. Might I give you a word of advice, boy? Don't be bringing up Irina in these parts. Folk won't take to it too well.

Kieran's only gotten more confused.

KIERAN

So, you do know who I'm talking about? You do know Irina?

Cora sighs and goes to shut the door, but Kieran reaches out a hand to stop her.

KIERAN (CONT'D)

Wait! Ma'am, I'm sorry. I won't bring her up again. Might you have an empty room? I've barely slept all night and I have nowhere else to stay. This is a saloon, right?

Cora contemplates for a second. It appears as if she wishes to deny him, but her integrity as a business owner doesn't let her. She opens the door wider and Kieran smiles gratefully and follows her inside.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE VI.

The sun is at last risen. SHERIFF BICKERS sits on the patio in front of the sheriff's station, smoking a pipe. His feet are kicked up on the railing. Really, he looks as if he cannot be bothered by anything. A man without a care on his mind. It's a bit of an unsettling trait for a sheriff to have. Cora stands beside him, they are talking, but the audience cannot hear what they're saying.

Enter Kieran from the saloon. As he walks through the door, he's shrugging on his jacket. He does not have his guitar with him this time. He looks a bit lost, eyes frantically skittering over the town, but then he spots Sheriff Bickers and Cora and squares his shoulders. Kieran approaches, as Sheriff Bickers relights his pipe, blowing out puffs of smoke while Cora leans against one of the support beams. Before Kieran can say anything, Sheriff Bickers gives him a pointed look.

SHERIFF BICKERS

You must be the newcomer, Cora Edwards here mentioned that a stranger showed up in the middle of the night. You gave her quite the fright, boy.

KIERAN

I—I'm sorry, sir—

Kieran turns to Cora

KIERAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, ma'am, it wasn't my intention to scare you.

Cora does not seem impressed and Sheriff Bickers chuckles. He's quiet for a moment as he looks Kieran over.

SHERIFF BICKERS

What's your name, boy?

KIERAN

It's Kieran, uh—Kieran O'Devlin.

SHERIFF BICKERS

Well, Kieran O'Devlin, what was it you and Mrs. Edwards talked about?

Kieran looks surprised as he glances between Sheriff Bickers and Cora.

KIERAN

You didn't tell him?

Cora gives him a warning look, but still shrugs, giving off the appearance that it's not of great importance.

CORA

I was a bit preoccupied explaining how we didn't have a fox or coyote problem, but that the screaming was just a young man nearly breaking down my door at an ungodly hour of the night.

SHERIFF BICKERS

Quite the relief to hear, I must say, I wasn't all that keen on having to put together a hunting party.

So, what was it that got you so worked up, Mister O'Devlin?

Kieran thinks for a moment, considering Cora's advice. He cannot bring himself to look at her as he doesn't listen.

KIERAN

I was asking about Irina.

Sheriff Bickers stiffens and his feet drop down from the railing. He leans in towards Kieran and blows out smoke into his face. Cora covers hers in disappointment and shifts with unease.

SHERIFF BICKERS

How do you, boy, know about Irina?

KIERAN

I saw her...down at the riverbank. She—



Sheriff Bickers cuts him off with a booming laugh. He falls back into his chair and slaps his knee. Certainly overdramatic. Kieran looks to Cora for help, but the woman offers none. Now it's her turn to not even meet his gaze.

SHERIFF BICKERS

Which one of the kids round here put you up to this? It was one of Maessen's girls, wasn't it? Oh man, they sure do love to stir up trouble.

KIERAN

No, sir, nobody put me up to it, I—

SHERIFF BICKERS

—Let me tell you something, boy, for your own peace of mind. Irina left weeks ago. She vanished the night before she was to be wed. Just up and left while everyone slept. Nobody's seen her since, and there ain't no way she's coming back. I don't know how you learned of her, but she certainly hasn't been loitering around by the river.

KIERAN

No, that's not possible...it can't be. I swear she was there.

SHERIFF BICKERS

Cora, you were right. This boy is mad, aren't you, Mister O'Devlin? It's a real shame about

Irina, a real shame indeed. But it don't do nobody no good to keep digging into it, you hear me?

She's gone, that's the end of it.

Now, shit, where are my manners?

Welcome to Tempe, Arizona, Mister O'Devlin. My name's Sheriff Bickers, and you've met the lovely Mrs. Cora Edwards, here, she runs the saloon during the summer. Now, I really do hope you enjoy your stay here with us, but do keep in mind we are a lawful town here, and I don't tolerate any sort of law-breaking, delinquency, or wrongdoing of any sort. After all, the safety and peace of mind of my townsfolk are my greatest priority. Now, if you excuse me, I need to go check in with my deputies.

Sheriff Bickers hauls himself to his feet, exhaling a grunt as he does so. He clammers down off the patio and exits stage right, leaving Kieran and Cora alone. Cora descends the patio as well, still unwilling to meet his gaze.

CORA

Well, I ought to be off, the saloon won't take care of itself.

Cora starts towards the saloon, but Kieran tries to stop her.

KIERAN

Wait, Mrs. Edwards, I—

Cora wheels on him, anger evident in her eyes. She meets his gaze now, and Kieran shrinks back at the intensity of it.

CORA

I warned you. I specifically warned you not to be bringing Irina up to nobody in this town.

Especially not to Sheriff Bickers. But no, you and your lovesick little heart, pining over a fantasy, just had to go and press further. Believe it or not, I was trying to help you.

KIERAN

What do you mean? Help me? Why not Sheriff Bickers? He's the sheriff, isn't finding missing persons and that sort his whole job?

CORA

Well, I suppose it's better if you know now. You'll find out soon enough anyways. Irina skipped town because of Sheriff Bickers. Mustn't've been too keen on the prospect of marrying the man. See? Now you know.

KIERAN

Mrs. Edwards...

Cora raises her hand, stopping him.

CORA

No. Mister O'Devlin. I meant what I said. Saloons don't run themselves. I can't sit here squabbling over these matters with you all day. There's nothing more to it, nothing else you need to concern yourself with. I wish Irina would come back, believe me, I do. But it ain't gonna happen.

She's gone.

Cora exits into the saloon, leaving Kieran alone in front of the sheriff's station.

## SCENE VII.

Enter All Maessens from stage left. They do not laugh or scream or dance this time. No, they seem quite exhausted, shoulders slumped and moving lazily. They pass in front of Kieran to one of the houses where there are chairs. Or they sit on the floor. Maessen Leader dramatically exhales and lays herself on the ground or drapes herself over the chair in exhaustion. Kieran watches them pass, and then he gets an idea. He runs over to them.

KIERAN

Hey! Excuse me!

Maessen Girls look between themselves and then at him. They ignore him, closing their eyes, readying themselves for a nap.

KIERAN (CONT'D)

Excuse me, ladies, I'm terribly sorry, but I was wondering if I could ask you a few questions.

Maessen Leader peers an eye open, lifting her head slightly.

MAESSEN LEADER

Have we truly been gone so long that the sheriff found a new deputy lurking in the grass? I did not take him as the sort to settle for a boy so skinny, with nimble fingers instead of imposing shoulders.  
And no pistol strapped to his thigh!  
Still, I assure you, sir, our palms bear no specks of blood. Our spirits are untainted.  
We have committed no crimes. We have witnessed none either.

Kieran frowns.

KIERAN

What? No—I'm not a deputy. I'm a musician—

The other Maessen Girls are roused from sleep and Maessen Leader sits up straighter. Though the Maessen Girl's voices are still groggy.

## MAESSEN GIRLS

Oh, a musician!  
 We love musicians.  
 Do you know any Tchaikovsky? Or how about Christoph Willibald Gluck?

## KIERAN

It's rather difficult to play Tchaikovsky on the guitar—

## MAESSEN LEADER

Well, no matter! Play us something, would you?

## KIERAN

I'm sorry I really need to—

## MAESSEN GIRLS

Just one song?

## KIERAN

Please, I—

## MAESSEN GIRLS

Two, if you're feeling gracious.

Kieran grows incredibly frustrated.

## KIERAN

I just want to know about Irina!

All Maessen's fall silent. Enter Irina, she lurks in the back, nobody notices her, but she is listening, worried, weaving through the set.

## KIERAN (CONT'D)

You're Maessen's girls aren't you? Sheriff Bickers said you lot were trouble.

## MAESSEN LEADER

Sheriff Bickers says a lot of things. His tongue quite likes to rattle against his teeth; his ears find the timbres of his own voice quite melodious, more so than the lullabies his own mother would sing to him in the cradle. Indeed, Sheriff Bickers says a lot of things, but few can be deemed substantive or imbued with truth. There are many things the man does not say, either.

## KIERAN

What the hell does that mean? Everyone in this damn town keeps giving me these ridiculous non-answers.

(MORE)

## KIERAN (CONT'D)

It's all "Irina's not coming back," "Give up," "Stop prodding" Everybody seems so certain, but nobody will tell me why.

Mrs. Edwards said I was pining after a fantasy, but she seemed so real... Just for once could somebody please be straightforward?

Maessen Leader looks ready to respond, Irina steps forward so Maessen Leader notices. Kieran doesn't. Irina shakes her head, pleading, but Maessen Leader

## MAESSEN LEADER

Straightforward, you say?

Well, mister musician, there's nothing straightforward about a girl running away from her own husband-to-be is there?

To not have the time to lace up one's boot in the middle of the night, to still forget one's jacket on the hook.

## MAESSEN GIRLS

Doesn't seem very planned does it, mister?

## MAESSEN LEADER

A plan cut short. Snuffed out before it could be set ablaze.

## MAESSEN GIRLS

You're right to be asking about Irina. Folk around here know more than they'll admit.

## MAESSEN LEADER

There are many things Sheriff Bickers doesn't say, either.

## MAESSEN GIRLS

Ask him what he knows about snakes!

Oh, Sheriff Bickers knows a lot about snakes.

Sheriff Bickers loves to talk about snakes.

Coral, king, coachwhip, gopher...the diamondback?

Irina stumbles the next time she tries to move; her ankle gives out for a moment, and she has to lean herself against something. Her face contorts in pain.

## MAESSEN LEADER

Oh, the diamondback!

He'd love to tell you about that one.

Quite potent venom...quite adept swimmers, too.

## MAESSEN GIRLS

It's a popular myth that the eastern diamondback rattlesnake must rattle before striking.  
Perhaps it's what we want to believe.

They have the rattle. Surely, they must use it? How else would we know they're  
there...lurking.

It seems, however, that the snake is quite capable of striking in silences.  
Sheriff Bickers could tell you more. You should ask him.

## KIERAN

I don't care about the snakes! This is such a waste of time. You're not trouble, you're mad.

Maessen Leader looks slightly offended, Irina is getting  
more nervous. She tries to wave at them to cut it out, but  
All Maessen's ignore her.

## MAESSEN LEADER

You should care about the snakes.

You should care about the laces on the boots, and the jacket on the hanger.

## MAESSEN GIRLS

She left her bag, you know.

Left it half packed on her bed.

Left it in quite the hurry.

Irina hobbles forward, looking ready to intervene, but  
Maessen Leader gives her a pointed look and she  
hesitates. Kieran does not notice. He's growing  
suspicious.

## KIERAN

How do you know that?

## MAESSEN GIRLS

How difficult it is to sleep when one rifles through their drawers in a panic.

The sound of clothes rustlings and drawers slamming lulls one from lovely dreams.

In dreams you are free from the constraints of mortality.

You can shed it like a second skin.

The truth is not the same when it comes to wakefulness.

Maessen Girls adjust themselves in their chairs or on the  
ground. They're trying to get more comfortable, and then  
they close their eyes.

KIERAN

Hey! Wait, you haven't answered my question. At least not straightforwardly. How do you know this about Irina?

Maessen Leader yawns.

MAESSEN LEADER

She should've stayed asleep. She wasn't supposed to leave.

Maessen Leader closes her eyes. Kieran tries to wake her but to no avail. He groans, it's nearly a scream of frustration. He exits stage left.

SCENE VIII.

Irina finally hobbles out into the open. She is not pleased.

IRINA

What the hell was that?!

Maessen Leader peers open an eye, and a sleepy smile curls at her lips.

MAESSEN LEADER

Your little lover boy is quite handsome.  
Rather annoying, though. Pestering, don't you think?  
He wouldn't play a song for us. You haven't happened to cross paths with chivalry, have you?  
It seems to be lacking in our world.

IRINA

Leave him alone.  
You should've left me alone. Nothing good ever comes from your meddling.

MAESSEN LEADER

Now, that's not a kind way to talk to your darling sister, is it?

IRINA

You haven't been very kind to me, either.  
Running to the sheriff? That wasn't very sisterly, was it?  
You owe me this. Leave. Him. Alone.

MAESSEN LEADER

We don't owe you anything. You needed to stay in Tempe, it's what the Fates willed.

IRINA

Ugh, you and the fucking Fates! Do you know how crazy you sound?

Neither really listen to the other. Fast paced.

MAESSEN LEADER

How were we to know you'd start running?

IRINA

This had nothing to do with fate this was purely between you lot, me, and the sheriff.

MAESSEN LEADER

You were a lot faster than we anticipated

IRINA

I just didn't want to marry that man!

MAESSEN LEADER

Why did you go to the riverbank?

IRINA

He's mean...

MAESSEN LEADER

You weren't supposed to go to the riverbank, not yet.

IRINA

He's old...

MAESSEN LEADER

We needed to stop you

IRINA

He stinks of tobacco...

MAESSEN LEADER

The wedding *wasn't* going to happen.

IRINA

And sweat...

MAESSEN LEADER

Not with him at least.

IRINA

He doesn't even have a cat...?



MAESSEN LEADER  
YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO DIE!

Irina falls silent. She stares at Maessen Leader for a moment before running off stage left.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE IX.

Small pool of light on Kieran. Keep the rest of the stage dark. He might still be in the city, but he's not at the center of it. He sits on the ground, head clutched in his hands. Irina runs in from stage right, she's still limping, and it looks painful.

IRINA

Kieran!

Kieran head jerks up. He looks beyond surprised. He immediately gets to his feet and runs to Irina.

KIERAN

Oh my god, Irina! Where have you been? I've been so worried...everyone in this town has lost their minds, I swear it. They said you weren't coming back.

Irina takes a step back before Kieran can embrace her. He falters for a moment.

IRINA

They were right. I told you not to stay longer than you needed. I told you this town had a way of getting into your bloodstream. It taints you, Kieran. It makes you think you're losing your mind.

KIERAN

Am I?

IRINA

What?

KIERAN

Am I losing my mind?

IRINA

No, I—

KIERAN

You just said you weren't coming back. But you're here. They said you were gone, but you're here. I thought maybe I'd just imagined us meeting, but how could I invent a girl who truly existed? Even I don't have that skill. Still, I have this nagging feeling that maybe—

IRINA

You didn't imagine it, and you didn't invent me. I exist, Kieran.

KIERAN

Then why aren't you here?!

Irina opens her mouth. Then, she closes it. Kieran stares at her. They're both silent for a moment. Finally, Irina speaks, but she sounds unsure.

IRINA

My sister...she told Sheriff Bickers I was going to leave. She saw me packing and left. I thought she was going to the bathroom or something, but she left.

A few minutes later, I looked up out the window and there he was. Marching across the street. He had such an angry look in his eyes. It was terrifying. I was terrified. I tried to put on my shoes, but he was so close...so I just ran.

I opened the back door, and just ran as fast as I could, away from Tempe. He followed, but I've always been faster. He could never keep up in the two-step. I ran, and he kept following, so I kept running. I didn't know what he'd do to me if he caught me. He had such an angry look in his eyes. The thought that he'd kill me crossed my mind for a moment, and no matter how ridiculous it was, I clung to it. He was capable of it. I've seen him knock a man unconscious before. Knocked a few teeth right out... He has such big hands...

I made it to the riverbank and then I kept going. Away from Tempe. I was running. He was yelling. And then there was this excruciating pain in my ankle, and I stumbled.

Suddenly I was in the river. I think I hit my head on a rock. I can't remember what happened next. But it was dark, so dark. And so cold.

But then, out of that darkness, I heard your music.

It was like being called home. Kieran, I'd never felt more at home than when I first heard you play. I'd never felt safer than when I first spoke to you. I don't know why.

My sisters would call it Fate, and maybe they're right. But we met too late. Don't you understand? We met too late.

KIERAN

No...I don't...Irina...I don't understand.

Kieran reaches out for her, and it looks like their hands brush, but he frowns.

KIERAN (CONT'D)

I can't feel you. Why can't I feel you?

IRINA

Bury me, would you? A shade unburied is stuck in the liminal space between life and death.

Find Cora, tell her to follow the current.

Kieran shakes his head; he runs his fingers through his hair and almost starts to tear.

KIERAN

No...no. You're not dead, that's impossible. Ghosts aren't real.

IRINA

There are a lot worse things in this world to worry about than ghosts.

Find Cora. I'm tired, Kieran. Please. She'll know what to do.

Kieran staggers back. He starts to walk backwards away from her, until finally he turns around and breaks into a sprint, exiting stage left.

BLACK OUT.

#### SCENE X.

Enter Kieran from stage right, he has his guitar and his bag. He appears ready to leave. He's out of breath — he's not a runner, a track star, he's got good lungs, but his legs burn like a million suns — he stops running center stage and bends over, hands braced on his knees as he gasps for air.

Enter All Maessens from both wings, they meet in the middle and start to circle him. When they speak, they are malicious and luring. Like sirens ready to drag sailors into the depths of the sea. They call out to him, predator to prey. Taunting.

MAESSEN LEADER

Kieeeeeerrrrannnn!

Mister Musiciannnnn!

MAESSEN GIRLS

Kieran whips his heads around and staggers in a circle, following them. They continue to mock and taunt him.

Play us a song, would you?

MAESSEN LEADER

It's what Irina would've wanted.  
She's rather fond of you, you know?  
Asked us to leave you alone.  
But where's the fun in that?

MAESSEN GIRLS

Fate's path is clear to us now, our threads loosed and ready to be set straight.  
But you know this, don't you? You know what is to happen.

MAESSEN LEADER

What, no? I don't—

KIERAN

You've suspected it for a time, something deep within you feels righted even if being here feels wrong.  
Like a broken bone set back into place. Painful, but right.

MAESSEN LEADER

More to himself than anyone else.

I've truly gone mad.

KIERAN

He clutches his head.

A ghost speaks to me. Did you see her, too?

KIERAN (CONT'D)

Oh yes.

MAESSEN GIRLS

How?

KIERAN

MAESSEN LEADER

She cannot cross the river, so she comes to us. Seeking help.

KIERAN

The river? But she was in it...?

MAESSEN LEADER

Not that one.

She points down to the ground, indicating the underworld. She does so, as if it's a gleeful secret. She whispers:

MAESSEN LEADER (CONT'D)

That one.

MAESSEN GIRLS

You know of what we speak?

KIERAN

Yes, I think so.

MAESSEN GIRLS

So, you understand?

KIERAN

No.

Maessen Leader sighs, exasperated.

MAESSEN LEADER

You do. You know what comes next.

KIERAN

No, I really don't.

MAESSEN LEADER

You've walked this road, over and over.

Yes, it's veered off course, the silt beneath you, unfamiliar, but the destination is still the same.

MAESSEN GIRLS

Two and a half thousand years' worth of knowledge wiped away by Oblivion...confronting Fate is never easy, boy.

Kieran speaks to himself now, dazed.

KIERAN

The vultures swoop overhead, awaiting to gnaw at my bones.

He claws at his neck.

KIERAN (CONT'D)

The vipers constrict around my throat, blocking the air in my lungs. I can't breathe. And they mock me for it. Their hissing comes out like giggles, and my struggles only delight them further.

Once Kieran starts speaking, enter Sheriff Bickers from stage left. He creeps on stage. No one notices. A realization dawns on Kieran.

KIERAN (CONT'D)

I need to find Cora.

All Maessens part to let him move, yet as he goes to exit stage left, Sheriff Bickers cuts him off. Kieran almost collides with him. The sheriff is imposing, forcing Kieran to walk backwards, back to center stage.

SHERIFF BICKERS

Well, well, well, what have we here? Mister O'Devlin, leaving so soon?

KIERAN

I was looking for Cor—Mrs. Edwards. Need to talk to her before signing out of the saloon.

Maessen Girls are genuinely trying to be helpful.

MAESSEN GIRLS

Ask him about snakes.  
The diamondback?

After a moment of shock, Sheriff Bickers' face twists into one of anger. He swiftly recovers.

SHERIFF BICKERS

Did you happen to see one, boy? Unfortunately, they're quite common around these parts. But be careful, they've got a nasty bite. Summer's got them hiding in the most inauspicious of places.

KIERAN

Did a diamondback bite Irina?

Sheriff Bickers laughs uneasily.

SHERIFF BICKERS

Now, Mister O'Devlin, how would I know that?

KIERAN

When you chased her to the riverbank?  
Got her killed? Maybe you saw it.

MAESSEN GIRLS

The shoelaces...

SHERIFF BICKERS

You ain't implying I had anything to do  
with her disappearance, are you boy?

MAESSEN GIRLS (CONT'D)

the jacket....

MAESSEN LEADER

The bag...?

KIERAN

Clearly, I am, sir. Her disappearance, her death. She was to marry you, wasn't she? Didn't like that prospect very much. So, you chased her out into the wilderness. The rattlesnake bit her, didn't it?

SHERIFF BICKERS

Why you fucking bastard.... you've completely lost your mind.

KIERAN

You took the words right out of my mouth.

SHERIFF BICKERS

Quite lofty accusations you're making, boy. I'll give you one last chance to come to your senses.

KIERAN

You really left her out there? Wanted to save your hide so bad that you let the current take her body away? Couldn't let anyone know that the good ole Sheriff Bickers killed a member of his town.

Sheriff Bickers pulls a pistol from his thigh, aiming it at Kieran's head. Kieran is not as scared as he should be, as he would've been. Death does not frighten him.

SHERIFF BICKERS

I didn't kill her! She did that to herself.  
But...you, you're a different story.

KIERAN

Do it.

Kieran steps forward so the barrel of the gun presses against his forehead.

KIERAN (CONT'D)

You won't. You're a lawful town after all. I haven't committed any crimes.

Sheriff Bickers is red-faced and angry. He cocks the gun.

SHERIFF BICKERS

A delusional boy tried to attack the town's beloved sheriff. In an unfortunate series of events, he was shot and killed. Purely self-defense.

KIERAN

Cora will know. They—

(He gestures to ALL MAESSENS)

will know. Not so easy to cover up a death when the river can't wash it away. Even still, the river won't wash you clean. She'll turn up.

Sheriff Bickers seethes. He uncocks the gun and stuffs it back into its holster, but he seizes Kieran, pulling his arms behind his back. Sheriff Bickers starts dragging Kieran offstage left, Kieran thrashes as All Maessens look on, not entirely sure if they should intervene. Kieran turns to Maessen Leader.

KIERAN (CONT'D)

Get Cora, tell her everything!

Maessen Leader nods. Sheriff Bickers huffs and drags Kieran offstage.

BLACKOUT.



## SCENE IX.

Lights up on Kieran behind bars. Could manifest in a string around him, a change in lighting, or even an actual prison cell if you so desire. Something should serve as a physical boundary between him and everyone else, though. He's pacing around his cell, full of nervous energy. Enter Cora.

CORA

I came as swiftly as I was able. Are you hurt? What happened?

KIERAN

Cora! No-no I'm fine. It's the sheriff, it's his fault. Irina...it's his fault. She's gone...dead

Cora is melancholy, mourning, but she's not entirely surprised.

CORA

I suspected as much. I didn't want to believe it, but...

KIERAN

I see her. Her ghost.

CORA

I'm sure you do.

Kieran stares at her blankly. After a moment, she elaborates.

CORA (CONT'D)

Shades unable to cross the river often seek the help of their beloveds. Patroclus sought Achilles. Polydorus sought Hecuba. It's only natural she would seek you.

KIERAN

But I didn't even know her when she was alive.

CORA

Not this lifetime, no.

KIERAN

You sound like Maessen's girls.

CORA

They are dangerous, those girls, meddling in the affairs of Fate, but they are privy to knowledge beyond the natural world. Sometimes they speak the truth. Their devotion grants them that.

But enough of that, tell me, Kieran, where is she?

KIERAN

In the river, she said to follow the current.

CORA

Will you be alright until I get back?

Kieran surveys his options.

KIERAN

I can't really go anywhere, can I?

CORA

No, I guess not.

KIERAN

Go, I'll be fine.

Cora nods and exits, leaving Kieran alone on stage. He wanders around the four corners of his cell for a bit, wasting time. He could hum, he could sing, he could go on some rant. He can sit down and talk to himself (never directly audience) But this should go on for a bit. A couple minutes. Enough to make the audience as uncomfortable as Kieran is. Time stretches onto eternity. Maybe Kieran goes to sleep. A restless sleep.

SCENE X.

Enter Irina. She hobbles over to Kieran. She crouches down next to him.

IRINA

Kieran! We don't have much time.

KIERAN

What...what do you mean?

IRINA

Thank the gods, thank you, they'll find me soon. But I...I just had to see you one last time.

KIERAN

One last time...that means you're not coming back?

IRINA

I can't...I won't be able to. Quite the caveat, isn't it? Eternal peace, but a complete severing of the world above. It won't be long now; Cora has half the town scouring the riverbank.

KIERAN

And the other half?

Irina falters.

IRINA

Deciding your fate.

KIERAN

How's it looking? A fine? Banishment? A hanging?

IRINA

It's difficult to say. I'm a ghost, Kier, not omnipotent.

KIERAN

Wait for me?

IRINA

Don't think like that.

KIERAN

It won't be long now, will it? I have a feeling. Like this intense sense of déjà vu. Two and a half thousand years swallowed by Oblivion, right?

IRINA

Kieran...

KIERAN

It's fine, really. Just...promise you'll wait for me?

IRINA

I will. I promise.

I love you.

KIERAN

How can you know that?

IRINA

I don't know. I think I always have.

KIERAN

I—

IRINA

SHERIFF BICKERS

(offstage, interrupting Irina )

Move! Out of my way!

Irina staggers back, hiding herself behind Kieran, her eyes wide as Sheriff Bickers enters. He's irritated, lip curled down in a sneer, and he huffs, adjusting his belt.

Isn't the defendant supposed to be present at his trial?

KIERAN

Usually, yes. Didn't seem necessary this time.

SHERIFF BICKERS

You'll find I disagree.

KIERAN

Spoken like a true criminal.

SHERIFF BICKERS

He hasn't done anything wrong!

IRINA

And what crime have I committed?

KIERAN

You disrupted the peace.

SHERIFF BICKERS

Pardon? That's a crime?

KIERAN

## SHERIFF BICKERS

A most grievous one indeed. I wouldn't have spared ya, but it seems the jury felt rather forgiving today. Banishment. That's what they've decided. You're to leave Tempe, never return.

Kieran looks to Irina, uncertain. Sheriff Bickers unlocks the jail cell, stepping aside.

## SHERIFF BICKERS (CONT'D)

Effective immediately. Get your shit and fuck on off, alright? I pray we meet again, would give me reason enough to put a bullet through that head of yours.

## IRINA

Go, before he changes his mind. We'll meet again, hopefully not as soon as you think.

Kieran listens, going to leave, but Irina stops him.

## IRINA (CONT'D)

Kieran, wait.  
I think I love you, too.

He smiles then leaves Irina behind in the cell. He stops before Sheriff Bickers for a moment before shoving past him. He exits. Irina levels her gaze to Sheriff Bickers.

## IRINA (CONT'D)

Fuck you. You know, you're just a bully. Claiming to be for the law, but really you just do what you want, don't you? What are laws but your whim?

She spits in his direction. For a moment, Sheriff Bickers seems taken a back, he raises his hand to his cheek. Can he see her? She waves a hand in front of him, but he doesn't react. Sheriff Bickers pulls himself out of the daze and storms off, exiting. She clenches her fists at her side. Blackout.

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KIERAN stares at her blankly. After a moment, she elaborates.

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KIERAN

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CORA

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(MORE)

CORA (CONT'D)

Their devotion grants them that.  
But enough of that, tell me, Kieran, where is she?

KIERAN

In the river, she said to follow the current.

CORA

Will you be alright until I get back?

Kieran surveys his options.

KIERAN

I can't really go anywhere, can I?

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KIERAN

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IRINA

Kieran! We don't have much time.

KIERAN

What...what do you mean?

IRINA

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KIERAN

One last time...that means you're not coming back?

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And the other half?

Irina falters.

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Deciding your fate.

KIERAN

How's it looking? A fine? Banishment? A hanging?

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It's difficult to say. I'm a ghost, Kier, not omnipotent.

KIERAN

Wait for me?

IRINA

Don't think like that. Why...why would you say something like that?

KIERAN

It won't be long now, will it? I have a feeling. Like this intense sense of déjà vu. Two and a half thousand years swallowed by Oblivion, right?

IRINA

Kieran...

KIERAN

It's fine, really. Just...promise you'll wait for me?

IRINA

I will. I promise.

KIERAN

I love you.



IRINA

How can you know that?

KIERAN

I don't know. I think I always have. I say it and something in my chest unfurls like flower petals.

IRINA

I—

SHERIFF BICKERS

(offstage, interrupting Irina)  
Move! Out of my way!

Irina staggers back, hiding herself behind Kieran, her eyes wide as Sheriff Bickers enters. He's irritated, lip curled down in a sneer, and he huffs, adjusting his belt.

KIERAN

Isn't the defendant supposed to be present at his trial?

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IRINA

He hasn't done anything wrong!

KIERAN

And what crime have I committed?

SHERIFF BICKERS

You disrupted the peace.

KIERAN

Pardon? That's a crime?

Sheriff Bickers sniffs, hiking up his belt, adopting a disgustingly arrogant hauteur.

SHERIFF BICKERS

A most grievous one indeed. I wouldn't have spared ya, but the jury felt rather forgiving today. Banishment. That's what they've decided. You're to leave Tempe, never return.

Kieran looks to Irina, uncertain. Sheriff Bickers unlocks the jail cell, stepping aside.

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SCENE XIII.

Enter All Maessens. They are more unhinged than usual as they dance and move around stage. They're visibly intoxicated. Maessen Leader has traded her ivy wreath for a bull helmet. Some carry snakes (for safety's sake please make them fake) over their shoulder, in their hands. Some openly carry bottles of wine.

They strike their thyrsus on the ground; they play the crash cymbals and play the tambourine. They stumble around stage, drunkenly singing a dithyrambic hymn, moving set pieces for Tempe out of the way. By the time they are done, the stage should be empty, save for a few tree flats if the production decides to have them.

Enter Kieran with all his belongings: a collision of worlds. When he notices them, he freezes, very nearly turning around and walking off stage, but one of the Maessen Girls loops her arm through his and pulls him towards center stage. She grasps his hand and forces him to gaze with her as she sings along with her sisters. Finally, he wrenches himself free.

KIERAN

Stop! Stop, let me go! What the hell are you doing?

He staggers back and looks around at all of them.

KIERAN (CONT'D)

What are you all doing?

MAESSEN LEADER

A bacchanalia!

(like a secret)

We're the raving ones.  
Bacchants. Bassarids. Bacchae.

She gestures to their garbs.

MAESSEN LEADER (CONT'D)

Maenads. Can't you tell? We thought we were being quite on the nose.

MAESSEN GIRLS

Shhh!!!

MAESSEN LEADER

Oh...oops.

KIERAN

Something's wrong with you...I knew you were crazy, but you all seem off. Something has driven you of your wits. Out to the mountains and out of your minds.

## MAESSEN GIRLS

Evoë! A sisterhood of worshippers.

## MAESSEN LEADER

You know, men really aren't supposed to bear witness to these sacred rites.

All Maessens creep in towards Kieran and he tries to step away. They change their song. Maessen girls sing in the background. I do believe the song will take longer than the dialogue. Just go for as long as it takes, until all Maessans chant Evoë!

## MAESSEN GIRLS

Oh! I will take you back, Kathleen  
 To where your heart will feel no pain  
 And when the fields are fresh and green  
 I'll take you to your home again!  
 I know you love me, Kathleen, dear  
 Your heart was ever fond and true.  
 That life holds nothing dear, but you.  
 I always feel when you are near  
 The smiles that once you gave to me  
 I scarcely ever see them now  
 Though many, many times I see  
 A dark'ning shadow on your brow.  
 Oh! I will take you back, Kathleen  
 To where your heart will feel no pain  
 And when the fields are fresh and green  
 I'll take you to your home again!

## MAESSEN LEADER (CONT'D)

Perhaps if you join us? Played your music  
 in time with ours? Perhaps our god will  
 look upon you with favor. With fondness  
 even.

## KIERAN

My tongue can fashion no words,  
 nor can my fingers bring themselves  
 to pluck the strings. My countenance  
 is one of melancholy, of mourning. I  
 cannot entertain you as you wish.

## MAESSEN LEADER (CONT'D)

How dreary, how boring. A waste of proper talent, indeed.  
 Evoë! To a blind worshipper, the face of a man is indistinguishable from beast.  
 Our God imbues us with great strength. Are you sure you do not wish to partake?

## KIERAN

I will not.  
 I cannot.

A wide grin from Maessen Leader

## MAESSEN LEADER

Very well. Evoë!

ALL MAESSENS

Evoë!

They all lunge for Kieran, screaming, right as they reach him lights flash red. Kieran screams.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE IXX.

Lights up on an empty stage. I would love for some fog here, but if that is not feasible, then cold, bright white light. Something to make it feel eerie and otherworldly. IRINA sits towards the center, fiddling with her laces. Just passing the time. When Kieran stumbles in, she jumps to her feet.

IRINA

You're early.  
I told you not to be early.

KIERAN

You waited.

IRINA

Of course.

KIERAN

This is it isn't it?

IRINA

The Underworld.

KIERAN

I thought it would be worse.

IRINA

You caught the shore at a quiet moment. Usually its teeming with souls, all begging for passage across the Styx.

KIERAN

Can I even cross?

IRINA

I don't know.  
What happened?

KIERAN

Maenads.

IRINA

So, Fate did right itself.

KIERAN

Seems so.  
What was the name, my name?  
The first one I went by.  
I can feel it on the tip of my tongue.  
The syllables are pressed flowers upon my memory,  
but they're crumbling.  
I can't piece them together.  
Do you know yours?

IRINA

Not yet. I was hoping I'd have some epiphany when I crossed the river.

KIERAN

Your sisters said so many things, but that was what they didn't think to share?

IRINA

I don't know if they could.

KIERAN

Maybe they didn't want to. Maybe it would spoil their fun.

IRINA

Maybe.  
It starts with an E.  
Ends with one, too, I think.  
...My old name. I mean.

KIERAN

Eve?  
Does that make me Adam?

Irina laughs.

IRINA

No, I don't think so.

KIERAN

The sound doesn't taste right.

IRINA

I don't know if I want another name.  
I don't want to be anyone else but Irina.

KIERAN

The name means nothing. You are still the same you from two and a half thousand years ago.

IRINA

I suppose...

Kieran outstretches his hand.

KIERAN

Walk with me?

Irina stares at it.

IRINA

Hand in hand into the Underworld?

KIERAN

Seems odd, doesn't it?

IRINA

I prefer it this way.

Irina and Kieran grasp hands.

KIERAN

Better than not knowing if you follow.

On the opposite side of the shore, enter Cora, arms outstretched, awaiting them both. Irina gasps and turns to Kieran.

IRINA

Orpheus?

BLACKOUT. END OF PLAY.