

THE BIRD MASK

written by
Mike Johnston

Mike.Johnston@me.com

(206) 250-7915

Eyes frozen open. Filled with blinding horror.

The tear-streaked face of CLARA (20).

CLARA

No. Not like this. No, please. No.

Still those eyes. Unblinking.

We catch our first real glimpse of the candlelit room.

INT. TARQUIN'S MANOR - PARLOR - NIGHT

Renaissance furniture with clawed feet and vertically striped wallpaper. Clara lies motionless in a gossamer gown, flopped across a fainting couch.

She weeps.

The silhouette of a MAN kneels beside her.

He whispers.

She *wails*.

He rises.

We never quite catch his face as he leaves.

A paisley cravat knotted around his throat.

Two henchmen, ATTICUS (30) and HUGO (30), enter. Not a word between them. Each as imposing as the Colossus of Rhodes.

Clara's body limp. Useless. Her voice all that remains.

Unceremoniously, the two drag her into...

THE HALLWAY

... And down the length of the floor. She *howls*.

But still those eyes. Clara's eyes. Filled with horror.

She gasps. Fights for each breath. Atticus and Hugo disappear around the corner with her.

FLOOR OF THE PIT

Two 15-foot-long KOMODO DRAGONS circle their stone prison. Walls nearly twenty feet high. Above, we hear a stout wooden door *bang* open and the anguished *cries* of Clara.

The dragons look up. Flick their tongues. Tasting the air.

Atticus and Hugo roll Clara over the side.

As her body approaches, it fills the screen and we go to...

BLACK

... A *thud*.

A tomb-like silence --

-- Shattered by the unmistakable sound of *snapping* bones and the blood-curdling *screams* of Clara being eaten alive.

This macabre symphony of terror lingers under...

... The title "THE BIRD MASK."

And echoes across...

INT. BASTILLE WORLD HEADQUARTERS - KEEN'S SUITE - DAY

A cold, austere, soignée interior. Walls of monitors.

Showing his back, KEEN (29) stares out a penthouse view, seemingly **TRAPPED IN A BOX**. Trapped inside the window frame.

He's arrogant. Cocksure. And kind of a big deal for someone the general public knows nothing about.

SENATOR BEAUREGARD (60) roars over the speakerphone.

BEAUREGARD (V.O.)
(Southern drawl)
Who the hell ya think ya are?

KEEN
Look, Beauregard --

BEAUREGARD (V.O.)
-- Is it the money? Cuz I got money.

KEEN
We're gonna pass.

BEAUREGARD
Ya can't just pass, son. I was told you're a professional. Fuckin' dark lord of the Internet or some nonsense.

KEEN
I could turn this around --

BEAUREGARD (V.O.)
-- But ya won't.

KEEN

But I won't.

BEAUREGARD (V.O.)

My goldarn constituents are burnin' me
in effigy in the streets.

KEEN

Sorry, Senator, but there are lines
that even I won't cross.

Chief operating officer of Keen's digital advertising empire,
LILITH (39), finishes tying Keen's shoelaces.

Bolts to her feet.

Presses MUTE.

LILITH

-- Since when?

She's a sigma female who's more than Keen's equal.

He settles behind computer screens.

LILITH

He'll pay anything.

Keen types fast. Scrolls data. Clicks frantically. His eyes
flit, making connections.

BEAUREGARD (V.O.)

Ya still there? Keen? Keen!

He presses UNMUTE.

KEEN

Let's play a game --

LILITH

(presses mute)

-- I hate games.

KEEN

(presses unmute)

Answer three questions without lying
and I'll make people love you again.

BEAUREGARD (V.O.)

And how ya plannin' on doin' that?

KEEN

Digital influence, social media psy-
ops, the usual tonic.

Lilith presses MUTE.

LILITH

What the hell are you doing?

Keen presses UNMUTE.

KEEN

First question: How much child support did you pay the ex last year?

BEAUREGARD (V.O.)

Well, um... I'd need a think on that.

KEEN

-- Should be a nice round number.

BEAUREGARD (V.O.)

All in?

KEEN

Zero. Zilch. The total number is nothing. -- But you didn't lie, so you're still in the running for my services to restore your good name.

Lilith shakes her head. Knows where this is headed.

Keen squints at a monitor.

KEEN

Next question: What's the balance in the offshore account you... -- Oh, this is just sloppy. You pay all three mistresses out of the same account?

BEAUREGARD (V.O.)

-- You blackmailin' me, boy?

KEEN

Zero. The account balance is zero after a generous donation to the N-double A-C-P.

Smashes the RETURN key on his keyboard.

BEAUREGARD (V.O.)

-- The hell?!

KEEN

And I'm sure these young ladies all have lots to talk about. So I put 'em on a thread with your wife. -- But you still haven't lied, so final question.

BEAUREGARD (V.O.)
 -- Yer fired, ya hear me? Fired!

KEEN
 How many days do you give a deadbeat
 dad, a Senator caught taking defense
 department kickbacks, before he's run
 outta office?

Stabs a button to end the call.

KEEN
 (to Lilith)
 Zero. The number, again, is zero.

LILITH
 Ugh, we needed that job. I have an
 entire staff out there on payroll.
 What's our next assignment?

KEEN
 I want you in on this next meeting.

LILITH
 With who?

INT. ARCHIBALD'S DOWNTOWN OFFICE - LATER

Effortlessly, Keen solves a RUBIK'S CUBE one-handed as he
 talks. A calming habit. Without even looking, moves the red
 side from top to bottom and side to side. Confers with...

... Lilith and their exasperated attorney, ARCHIBALD (70).

KEEN
 Good news or bad?

LILITH
 -- Just keep us out of the Hague,
 Archibald.

ARCHIBALD
 I'm out of moves here.

KEEN
 The bank?

ARCHIBALD
 No shit, the bank. Let me be clear,
 I've stalled them about as long as
 legally possible, going on years now.

LILITH
 -- Uhhh, what are we talking about?

ARCHIBALD

They're done playing nice, Keen. You need to give them back the necklace.

KEEN

I'm never giving 'em my necklace. The necklace is mine. They adopted me --

ARCHIBALD

-- And I'll stop you right there. They never officially filed for adoption. So I'm sorry, but the bank has infinite resources to fight this, and your parents passed with infinite debts. The bankers want that necklace to help settle the estate.

Keen spikes the Rubik's Cube on Archibald's desk.

ARCHIBALD

I hate they're making you do this, but as your attorney, I'm telling you...

LILITH

-- And we appreciate everything you do for us, Archibald. Don't we, Keen?

KEEN

Gawd, I hate people --

LILITH

-- You don't hate people.

KEEN

I hate you --

LILITH

-- You don't hate me.

KEEN

Well, I hate him a little.

ARCHIBALD

Why does he hate me?

LILITH

He doesn't hate you, Archibald. That's the trauma talking.

KEEN

I hate everybody.

LILITH

Well, I don't know anything about any necklace, so why, oh why, am I here?

KEEN

Because that's our next assignment.
Find my birth mother.

LILITH

C'mon, we've been looking for her for
years now. Give or take, off and on.

KEEN

Effective immediately, everyone's
showing up for this.

ARCHIBALD

-- Tell her the rest.

KEEN

When my folks told me I was adopted,
they said my birth mother gave them a
necklace to give to me...

ARCHIBALD

-- A ruby and diamond rivière.

KEEN

... It was supposed to remind me I was
loved or sumthin' corny like that.

ARCHIBALD

-- It's insured for over a hundred
grand and the bank wants it back.

LILITH

Gotcha.

ARCHIBALD

But, Keen, if you ever find her --

KEEN

-- When I find her...

ARCHIBALD

When you find her, have you thought
about what you're going to ask her?

KEEN

Yeah-yeah, that's a good point. Draw
up whatever I need her to sign.

LILITH

-- That's not what he's asking.

There's a puzzle he hasn't quite solved.

KEEN

They're not getting my necklace.

LILITH

Okay, well, we're on a clock. How much time do we have?

ARCHIBALD

None. In my estimation, they'll have a warrant by the end of the week, and then they'll start busting down doors.

INT. UBER PRIUS - BACK SEAT - DAY

Lilith's baffled by Keen's Rubik's Cube.

LILITH

Is that why you blew off the Senator?

Keen stares out the window.

LILITH

We need another client, you know.

KEEN

I'm the client --

LILITH

-- One that pays.

KEEN

Ah, the business is fine. The business is fine, right?

LILITH

I want you to make me a partner.

That gathers his full attention.

She offers Keen the Rubik's Cube, which he solves in seconds.

KEEN

You know, technically, you already make more money than me.

LILITH

-- More than technically.

KEEN

And you all but run this place.

LILITH

-- I do run this place.

KEEN

So see, you're kinda already a partner in a way.

LILITH

Oh, really? I've dedicated my entire life to your agency, Keen. I've put in the work. No home life, kids, husband. Shit, I don't even have a goldfish.

KEEN

You know how to do what I do?

LILITH

You play puzzles all day. You, you solve anagrams --

KEEN

-- I see connections that other people don't, details, things that don't fit.

LILITH

And I do everything else!

Keen doesn't meet her eyes.

LILITH

-- Oh, you don't trust me --

KEEN

-- I don't trust anyone.

LILITH

You don't think I can find her.

KEEN

I haven't, and I've been trying.

LILITH

I'm not gonna beg you.

KEEN

-- Find my mother.

LILITH

If I find your birth mother, you'll make me a partner?

Each searches the other's face. Shake hands. Neither stops.

KEEN

You know, sometimes the worst punishment's having your dreams come true.

LILITH

Well, what if your real mom doesn't live up to the fantasy one?

EXT. OFFICE TOWER PLAZA - DAY

Headed for the doors, Keen and Lilith battle through a crowd.

LILITH

What if your real mother isn't the perfect mother who never let you down, never embarrassed you in front of the whole school, or sent you to bed without dinner because she thought you were getting a little chunky?

(impersonates her mother)

And you know boys. Boys don't like the chunky girls, young lady.

KEEN

We so deserve each other.

LILITH

You find a client. I'll find your mother.

KEEN

And then I'll make you a partner.

INT. BASTILLE WORLD HEADQUARTERS - KEEN'S SUITE - DAY

Toting HEAVY BURLAP SACKS, Atticus and Hugo enter --

-- Followed by a protesting receptionist, MILLICENT (20). She's about as threatening as someone riding a parade float.

MILLICENT

Oh, no. You... Y-you can't come in here.

The stoic henchmen manhandle mementos and puzzles on shelves.

MILLICENT

Or do that. Or touch anything!

An effete hipster, QUINTUS (20) saunters to the boss' desk. Drapes his satin cape over it. Lowers into Keen's chair.

MILLICENT

Or put your stuff there. Oh, no sitting. There is no sitting.

Dumbfounded, Keen and Lilith arrive.

KEEN

Did we have something on the books?

MILLICENT

I tried to stop 'em, Keen. I swear.

QUINTUS

(rises)

Bless her heart, she did try.

Keen flips his Rubik's Cube to Millicent.

She snatches it out of the air and huffs back to her station.

Glowing, Quintus reaches and shakes Keen's hand.

Gently, kisses Lilith's hand.

Keen spies...

... Hugo hovering over the middlegame of a chess match.
Stretches for the BLACK QUEEN.

KEEN

-- Excuse me. Please don't do that.

HUGO

(Russian accent)

Ten moves for checkmate.

KEEN

Six, if you castle the king --

LILITH

-- Gentlemen, how can we help?

QUINTUS

Our master sent us here with but a single question.

LILITH

-- Excuse me, your master?

KEEN

(to Lilith)

Master, huh? I kinda like that.

LILITH

-- Not a chance in hell.

KEEN

What question?

QUINTUS

Are you... the... shit?

Keen and Lilith trade stares of poorly masked confusion.

QUINTUS

It? The one? The best? The total package? G.O.A.T.? Undisputed --

KEEN

-- Yes. Yes, I am.

QUINTUS

Sold. You'll be paid generously for your services. Deets to follow when you meet the master tomorrow night at the ball. -- It's a masquerade ball. And, trust me, it's to die for.

Quintus offers a sealed scroll on parchment.

QUINTUS

Your invite. Dress appropes. The addy's on the back.

Studies Lilith like bycatch snared in his net.

QUINTUS

-- Oh, and sorry, dear. No plus-one.

KEEN

And who am I meeting?

QUINTUS

Tarquin --

LILITH

-- Tarquin?

QUINTUS

Tarquin Demeaux, a marvelous showman and mentalist. He can see inside your mind. Probe your deepest memories. It's all so totally mysterious.

KEEN

Sounds peachy.

QUINTUS

(aside to Keen)
But gimme, like, the foe-real, real. Cuz, I mean, no cap, he'll know.

KEEN

Start poppin' corks, baby.

QUINTUS

Boom!
(to Atticus and Hugo)
We're outta here, gents.

KEEN

-- But I'm not calling him master.

QUINTUS

Obvs.

Whips on his cape. Starts for the door.

LILITH

Oh, and one quick thing: There is a little matter of our retainer. We accept crypto, wire transfers --

-- Atticus and Hugo empty their sacks on Keen's desk. Piles of 17th-century GOLD DOUBLOONS spill out.

QUINTUS

Yeah, we're gonna need a receipt.

INT. BASTILLE WORLD HEADQUARTERS - CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Urbane corporate America with a whiff of entitlement.

Lilith grills her top lieutenants. SIMON (late 20s) always thinks he's in charge. And TINKER (early 20s) always thinks he's the smartest one in the room.

SIMON

I'm telling you. She doesn't exist.

LILITH

I hope you're not planning on telling him like that.

SIMON

I'm not telling him anything.

TINKER

-- Don't look at me.

LILITH

You've tried everything?

SIMON

We've tried everything.

LILITH

Everything?

TINKER

Everything.

SIMON
 (to Tinker)
 Everything?

TINKER
 You ganging up on me, Simon?

LILITH
 Every orphanage?

TINKER
 Hacked.

LILITH
 Adoption records?

TINKER
 Totally hacked.

LILITH
Sealed records?

TINKER
 And DNA sites. Look, we've tracked
 down babies dropped at fire stations
 and abandoned in dumpsters, news
 reports, medical reports, rumors...

SIMON
 She doesn't exist.

LILITH
 (winces)
 You got anything, Mack?

With military-grade confidence, MACK, (mid-30s) presents like
 she should be in fatigues, brandishing an assault rifle.

MACK
 We got a hit on the bounty.

SIMON
 (ironic)
 Oh, sign me up for more of that.

TINKER
 -- Another wild goose chase.

MACK
 Two hits.

LILITH
 What bounty? I didn't sanction any
 bounty.

MACK
Intel, leading to the yadda, yadda.

SIMON
-- Nothing but a bunch of cranks who
like wasting my time.

MACK
(to Tinker)
But this morning, I put all those
cranks into your fancy number box...

TINKER
-- My A.I. is not a toy.

LILITH
(cautioning)
-- Tinker.

MACK
... And it spit out something real
interesting.

LILITH
Mack, enough of the fan dance.

INT. BASTILLE WORLD HEADQUARTERS - KEEN'S SUITE - DAY

Keen and Lilith huddle over his desk.

LILITH
Two of the leads Mack found for your
mother, they're related.

KEEN
What does that mean?

LILITH
They're sisters. By their ages, one
would be your aunt, the other your
grandmother. I'm sending our best team
to see if their stories line up.

KEEN
Good, because your Internet scrape of
possible matches for my mother is
longer than the goddamn U.S. census.

Keen scowls at his cell phone.

Flicks through an endless LIST OF NAMES on a spreadsheet.

KEEN
What if this new client can help?

LILITH

Who, the mind-reader? He's a fraud.

KEEN

How would you know?

LILITH

Because they're all frauds and con men and flim-flam artists. You own the most successful digital advertising agency on the dark web. We're all about facts, logic, data. Since when did you start believing in ghosts?

KEEN

What if he can pull something out of my memories? Maybe, maybe it could help us narrow down the list?

LILITH

Maybe. Have you given any serious thought to what you might tell her?

KEEN

Who, my mother? No.

LILITH

Maybe start with something like you're happy? You're doing okay?

KEEN

Lie?

LILITH

Wow.

KEEN

She was wrong. She gave up on me.

LILITH

And that's another way to go.

KEEN

Lilith...

LILITH

Keen, you've known that woman for all of no minutes in your entire life and she still haunts your every move.

They both stare at their shoes.

LILITH

Whaddya think the con man wants?

KEEN

I'll find out tomorrow. -- They're not taking my necklace.

LILITH

I won't let 'em, boss. Mack's got a lead, a good lead.

Wraps a crimson scarf around her neck.

KEEN

-- Where are you going?

LILITH

I have a date.

KEEN

You got a date?

LILITH

Keen...

KEEN

You're right, totally right. Your personal life is none of my business.

Lilith shoulders her purse. Relents.

LILITH

I'm shopping for your costume.

KEEN

-- Aha, I knew I was right.

LILITH

That woman doesn't have what you're looking for. It's inside of you.

As she slips out the door, they both sing.

KEEN

Good night, Lilith.

LILITH

Good night, Keen.

EXT. BUSTLING AIRPORT - DEPARTURE AREA - NIGHT

Mack, Simon, and Tinker yank luggage out of an ESCALADE.

INT. KEEN'S MASTER BEDROOM - DREAM - NIGHT

Keen rolls on his back. Silk sheets. Pillows everywhere.

Drifts off. Snaps alert.

As Keen rolls onto his side, he becomes HIMSELF AT AGE FIVE.
There used to be a cute kid in there once.

He's nose to nose with an impish REDHEADED WOMAN (22)
alongside him in bed. She's the spitting image of Keen.

Keen reaches for her.

Tenderly, she cradles him.

KEEN
How come I don't fit in this world?

REDHEADED WOMAN
Genius never does, baby.

EXT. LOWER-MIDDLE-CLASS HOME - NEXT DAY

An SUV rental parks at the curb.

Wearing her Sunday best, the AUNT (60s) edges out from behind
a dirty screen door. This is sister #1.

Mack, Simon, and Tinker unload cases from the SUV.

Ready for battle, the AUNT fixes her hands on her hips.

INT. BASTILLE WORLD HEADQUARTERS - KEEN'S SUITE - DAY

Lilith comes in hot. Straight to Keen's desk.

KEEN
How'd it go?

LILITH
Just finished.

Presses a landline button.

LILITH
Mack?

INT. SUV RENTAL - SLOW TRAFFIC - DAY

Mack drives.

Tinker, the copilot, speaks into the hands-free.

TINKER
It's Tinker.

MACK
-- I'm driving, ma'am.

In the backseat, Simon stows gear.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

TINKER
There were, uh, well... there were complications.

LILITH
What kind of complications?

SIMON
-- The kind where Tinker screws everything up.

TINKER
(the audio trails away)
Hey, I wasn't the one who...

Simon and Tinker continue bickering.

Keen presses MUTE.

KEEN
You trust these guys?

LILITH
They did Panama.

KEEN
(impressed)
Oh. -- Did The Embassy ever clean that one up?

LILITH
-- That wasn't Tinker's fault.

SIMON
I'm doing the next one. Case closed.

Lilith presses UNMUTE.

LILITH
Mack, what happened?

MACK
She wanted more money, ma'am.

Keen presses MUTE.

KEEN
What money?

Lilith presses UNMUTE.

LILITH
How much?

SIMON
Way too much. -- Stupid money.

MACK
I can go back and talk her down.

LILITH
We don't want another Panama.

TINKER
-- Panama was not my fault.

SIMON
(to Tinker)
She could smell the desperation all over you.

TINKER
Me? If you hadn't --

LILITH
-- Mack, take us off speaker.

MACK
Yes, ma'am.

Mack presses a button and picks up her phone.

LILITH
Is she credible?

MACK
I believe so, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

KEEN
-- What'd she say?

MACK
Is this...?

LILITH
It's him.

Mack swallows hard.

KEEN
-- And this is one of the two sisters that our A.I. identified, correct?

MACK
Affirmative, sir.

LILITH
(to Keen)
-- They both reached out for the bounty.

KEEN
(to Lilith)
What bounty?

LILITH
I approved it.

MACK
It was a negotiation from the jump, sir. She looks like she could be your aunt. But from the pictures in the house, her sister, your possible grandmother, she's the real jackpot.

KEEN
Follow up after you talk to the grandmother. I'll have questions.

MACK
Yes, sir. And, ma'am.

Lilith picks up.

MACK
Permission to drop these two alongside the road with bus fare.

LILITH
Your call. And send me your notes.

The handset drops in the landline cradle.

KEEN
That's our best team?

LILITH
Let's see where this next interview takes us with Grandma.

KEEN
More money? They sound like fakes.

Changing gears, Keen stands. Rubs his hands together.

KEEN
Okay, so what's my costume tonight?

LILITH
All hail, the king!

Tugs at a cloth covering a royal mantle, scepter, and gold crown. They all look real.

KEEN
You're kidding?

LILITH
(curtsies)
Nay, sire.

KEEN
You're not kidding.

LILITH
You are displeased, M'lord?

KEEN
I dunno if you're, like, pandering or messing with me?

LILITH
You influence key decision-makers, sway the masses, overthrow fucking governments. You are the king!

KEEN
Okay, pandering.

LILITH
(drops the act)
It's perfect.

KEEN
It's self-aggrandizing.

LILITH
Like I said. It's perfect. It's logical. -- That's your thing.

KEEN
No, not so much this time.

Lifts the crown.

KEEN
I could make this work.

Reconsiders.

KEEN
But the hair.

His hair's flawless. Piled high.

Lilith reaches to zhuzh the top of his head.

Keen ducks her hands like they were hedge trimmers.

LILITH

I got three masks. Pick one.

Keen ponders.

Stretches for a crow mask with black wings.

Lilith slaps his hand.

KEEN

(taken aback)

Ow.

He reaches for a dragon mask with scales.

Again, she smacks his hand.

KEENS

Really?

LILITH

You have control issues.

KEEN

No, I don't. I'm in control.

Cautiously, he grabs a mask with cat ears.

She allows it.

KEEN

That's the one I wanted anyway.

INT. TARQUIN'S MANOR - GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

A masquerade ball straight out of a Fellini wet dream.

Grotesque JESTERS waving bubble wands frolic through a throng of REVELERS in an English-styled manor. The whirling hues of a merry-go-round spin in one corner.

It's a full house. Every guest in a mask. Dancing. Greedy hands. Sequin gowns and formal wear in various stages of undress. Blaring EDM and pulsing lights.

Restraining the Komodo dragons from earlier, Atticus and Hugo stand guard before a weighty door with a rounded top.

On a balcony over the dance floor, Quintus motions for Keen to wait. He's wearing his cat mask, but we know it's Keen.

Quintus prances down a gilded staircase.

Strokes the serpent-headed knob adorning the handrail.

As Keen analyzes the rager below...

... Quintus threads through a labyrinth of dancers until he reaches a grandiose bar.

And a FEMALE BARTENDER (25) with glitter on half her face.

They're all church hugs and air kisses.

After a word, the Female Bartender shouts in his ear.

Quintus signals back to Keen.

Keen waves. Forces a smile, barely masking his anticipation.

He hustles down the stairs.

Weaves through frenzied dancers.

Cautiously, Keen and Quintus ease past Atticus, Hugo, and their pet Komodo dragons guarding the door to...

THE LIBRARY

... It feels like a page torn from the Book of the Dead.

Gargoyles over the fireplace, Gothic stonework, and arches. An incalculable number of first-edition books and scrolls filled with ancient, hidden, and forgotten knowledge.

A half dozen PARTY-GOERS in VENETIAN MASKS imbibe. Breathless myrmidons and sycophants, only there to feed the ego of...

... The master of the house, TARQUIN. Boisterous and devil-may-care, he's an accomplished manipulator, always selling his unquenchable zest for life.

Tonight, he's dressed like he was conjured from a Rembrandt portrait, and his face obscured with a linen head shroud.

Whirls to greet Keen and Quintus.

TARQUIN
(charming)
Goodbye!

Keen's confused.

Knowingly, the Party-goers snicker like a Greek Chorus.

TARQUIN

I so despise farewells. I prefer to get them out of the way early before we grow inextricably attached. -- I say, wouldn't you agree?

QUINTUS

(aside to Keen)

-- Did I tell you, or did I tell you? He just slays.

A dried **MONKEY'S PAW** dangles around Tarquin's neck.

It catches Keen's attention.

QUINTUS

Master, this is the one I was telling you about. Keen, this is Tarquin.

Instantly sold, Tarquin licks his lips. It's a whole thing.

He shoos away the others like flies and ushers Keen to a dark corner of the library. Quintus trails within earshot.

KEEN

I only have one question for you.

TARQUIN

Oh, no, my dear boy, you harbor a multitude of questions.

KEEN

Nah, just one big one.

TARQUIN

Fear not, the answer is an unequivocal yes.

KEEN

But I haven't asked the question yet.

QUINTUS

Go ahead now. -- Ask him.

TARQUIN

Ask me what you came here to ask me.

KEEN

Is it real or is it just an act?

TARQUIN

Oh, no-no-no-no-no-no-no, that's not your question.

KEEN

Yeah, that's pretty much it.

TARQUIN

-- Aw, but you were doing so well.

KEEN

Do you always talk like this?

TARQUIN

Do you always avoid the issue at hand?

Inspects Keen up, down, and sideways.

TARQUIN

You truly aren't a trusting soul.

KEEN

Oh, we're a long way from here to there. -- I trust no one.

TARQUIN

You've come here to ask a question, yet you still haven't asked it.

KEEN

I've seen my share of fakes and charlatans. I'm gonna need facts, proof, evidence.

TARQUIN

I assure you, my friend, I am no fake. And I shall prove it to you before you leave here tonight. -- I double-dog dare you.

Quintus gasps. Covers his mouth.

Keen shifts his weight.

Perks up.

TARQUIN

Now, I understand you're skilled in the art of manipulation.

KEEN

You mean digital advertising?

TARQUIN

-- Scusi?

KEEN

Influencing opinions, shaping behavior...

TARQUIN

-- Exploiting human weaknesses.

KEEN

Well, I wouldn't put it like that.

TARQUIN

Come, come, don't be modest.

KEEN

I'm fucking awesome at it.

TARQUIN

I knew it! Obviously, a cunning man, impossibly handsome. We have so much in common.

KEEN

I don't manipulate them per se. I lead people where they wanna go. Take social media, for example...

TARQUIN

-- For example.

Both turn to the Party-goers

Each engrossed in their phone.

KEEN

They blame it for all their problems. But they never consider, for a minute, they might be the problem. Oh, no, not them.

TARQUIN

-- Remarkably simple creatures.

KEEN

The algo's nothing but dumb ones and zeros. It serves them similar content to what they've already engaged with. So the feed's literally a perfect mirror of their true self, filled with lust, greed, anger, fear, you name it. -- Not what they think they are, but who they truly are deep down inside.

TARQUIN

And, if I may, by serving up more of what their tainted souls truly crave, you could theoretically seize and hold one's attention in perpetuity.

KEEN

-- Oh, more than theory.

TARQUIN

Well, this is perfectly clear. You and I are about to become fast friends.

Keen takes stock of a giant felt...

CIRCUS SIDESHOW BANNER

... Adorning the wall like a tapestry.

From the banner, a younger man in a tuxedo holds both temples and radiates a hypnotic glare.

Splashed across the top, "Magnus: The Illusionist" and a warning "You cannot hide from his mind."

TARQUIN

(admiring the poster)
Striking, wasn't I?

Rips away the head shroud, revealing the face of a man about sixty years old. Glowing with one **SHIT-EATING GRIN**.

And a very familiar paisley cravat.

TARQUIN

I will help you find whoever it is you're looking for.

KEEN

My mother. How'd you know that?

TARQUIN

Well. Well. Well.

KEEN

(pulls out his phone)
I was... -- We got separated when I was born. I, uh, I got a spreadsheet of potential matches for her.

Tarquin stares at Keen like he has three heads.

TARQUIN

And what words would you whisper in her ear, be you afforded the chance?

KEEN

Well, I, uh... I'd tell her... I'd tell her I did fine without her.

TARQUIN

-- Lie. Now that's the real question you've come to ask. But not of me.

And a question Keen's not ready to face yet.

TARQUIN

You see, you can lie to yourself, my friend, but you can never lie to me.

KEEN

-- Hold it, wait, how'd you know I was looking for someone?

Almost offended, Tarquin nods to the banner.

Keen isn't buying it.

TARQUIN

It's literally what everyone asks for.

Party-goers snicker.

TARQUIN

So our covenant will be that I find your mother in some lost memory, and you will tell me everything about exploiting human weaknesses with social media.

(an epiphany)

Are you hungry, my friend?

PARTY-GOERS

Feast. Feast. Feast.

TARQUIN

(wraps his arm around Keen)

I'm simply ravenous.

With unbridled joy, Party-goers bounce up and down and clap. Everyone parades out of the library...

... We land on the tiny print in a corner of the circus sideshow banner: "**1901 WORLD TOUR.**"

INT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - FLOOR OF THE PIT - NIGHT

Out of the darkness emerges the silhouette of a Komodo dragon. It grows larger as it crawls closer.

Flicks its tongue in the air. Sensing. Searching.

INT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - GREAT HALL - LATER

Tarquin tosses back his head as he laughs...

... In an opulent dining room replete with a retinue of SERVANTS and a banquet fit for a king. Everyone's still masked, except for Keen and Tarquin.

The ethereal radiance of soft candlelight and inky shadows.

The **FULL MOON** throws a shaft of light at the foot of a dead husk, a **GNARLED ELM** trapped in the wall and floor.

HOUSE CATS perched atop the branches. Beaming eyeshine.

The hushed murmurs of more Party-goers mottled with bursts of laughter. Each luxuriates and personifies different sins.

TARQUIN

(to Keen)

I do hope you're enjoying yourself.

The DUCHESS (22), bursting out of her costume, catches eyes with Keen. She's clearly ordering off the menu tonight.

KEEN

You could say that.

TARQUIN

Splendid!

Slaps the table.

TARQUIN

For mine is a house of endless temptations, such a maligned concept. I swear by them. They give us life! Surrender to your deepest desires, my friend. I do insist.

With a flick of his wrist, cracks open a folding hand fan.

Tarquin moves his attention to a **LARGE MIRROR** on one wall, reflecting a dim corner of the chamber...

... Where three AMOROUS PARTY-GOERS trade tongues. Grope. Nearby, a fourth one watches intently.

At the table, TWO SELF-ABSORBED WOMEN laugh. Peck at their dinner plates as they fete one another with compliments.

Confused, Keen edges between the mirror and the chamber.

There are **PEOPLE REFLECTED IN THE MIRROR** who aren't in the room. Most styled in clothes from a different era.

KEEN

When do start looking for my mother?

TARQUIN

In time, my friend, in good time. Life is so very short. I implore you not to let this moment pass. Indulge.

The Duchess gulps wine, spilling out the corner of her mouth.

A DOUGHY MAN wolfs down a slab of venison with his hands.

KEEN

Like a godless heathen.

TARQUIN

Precisely!
(to the room)
See, he understands.

THADDEUS (50) shoots Keen a lusty stare.

Rakes The Duchess' hair.

TARQUIN

How could you dare espouse something taboo without even sampling it? -- Oh, dear Lord, are you a pious man?

KEEN

Somewhat flexible in that area.

TARQUIN

Wonderful. You know, we all have our crooked tales to tell.

KEEN

We do?

TARQUIN

Oh, you! Ever done anything illegal?

KEEN

No.

TARQUIN

Nothing?

KEEN

Nope.

TARQUIN

Ever?

KEEN
Why do you ask?

TARQUIN
Unethical, perhaps?

KEEN
Not really.

TARQUIN
Never?

KEEN
No.

TARQUIN
(a mischievous grin)
Me neither.

-- Turns aside.

In a loud whisper to an unseen person:

TARQUIN
Oh, no, please. -- That time doesn't
count. What? That was eons ago.

KEEN
(to Quintus)
Eh, what's going on here?

QUINTUS
He, uh, like, sees people.

KEEN
People who aren't there?

QUINTUS
Oh, they're there. It's just Tarquin's
the only one who can see 'em.

Keen spots that...

... Tarquin isn't wearing the monkey's paw.

KEEN
What happened to the monkey's paw?

Uninterested, Quintus shrugs.

TARQUIN
-- Goodness, how awkward of me.
Another required my attention.

A FOOTMAN (30) raises a bottle of Slivovitz plum brandy.

FOOTMAN
-- Another, sire?

TARQUIN
Why do you keep asking me questions
you already know the answer to?

The Footman tops him up.

An all-seeing vassal, ODYSSEUS (40), appears in the doorway.
He's a contrarian. Disagrees with his expressive face.

TARQUIN
Insolent knave, you nearly missed it.

Odysseus shrugs a shoulder.

TARQUIN
(to Keen)
Allow me to present my acolyte,
Odysseus. He will assist.

Curtly, Odysseus nods.

KEEN
-- Then we're finally getting started?

TARQUIN
He's a mute. Great advantages to an
assistant who doesn't speak.

KEEN
Oh, don't have to sell me on that one.

TARQUIN
He once was an artful thespian, the
absolute best. But, alas, a dreadful
gambler. Had his tongue carved out by
one unsavory character.

Mortified, Keen turns to Odysseus.

TARQUIN
(barks)
Find Atticus and Hugo. They have work.

Odysseus skulks away.

TARQUIN
Loyal to a fault. We have whole
conversations without uttering a word.

A young adult TABBY CAT leaps onto Keen's lap. Purrs.

TARQUIN

(dour)
Oh, don't make friends.

KEEN

How come?

TARQUIN

They're... they're not really cats.

Keen inspects the feline nose to tail.

Satisfied, he scratches its head.

TARQUIN

Are you absolutely certain this is how
you'd like to be spending your time?

KEEN

I'm content --

-- Triggered, the Party-goers *hiss* and recoil.

The tabby *hisses* right back at them. Shows claws.

TARQUIN

Never speak that vile word again. We
were put in this world to live!

KEEN

-- Okay-okay, can we stop dicking
around and get to my mother?

Sets down the cat.

TARQUIN

Ah, there you are, my boy.

KEEN

And I got a few questions about you.

TARQUIN

-- Ooo, how exciting.

KEEN

Like, why?

TARQUIN

Well, to understand all of your
delicious secrets, of course.

KEEN

-- Lie!

That single word backfoots Tarquin.

But he recovers nicely with a Cheshire cat grin.

TARQUIN

Because such is the nature of men like us. We attract and hold attention and then reap the rewards. Why do you eat? Why do you breathe? It is our nature. It's what we do.

KEEN

And if you could change, would you?

TARQUIN

Hmm, I remember doing nothing else.

KEEN

-- That's not an answer.

TARQUIN

The bitter costs I've paid. But I have no intention of changing for anyone.

KEEN

Me neither.

TARQUIN

(breathe deeply)

Mm, you reek of such piquant bravado and desperation. Come sit closer, my broken little friend, and we'll prepare you to enter my mind.

KEEN

-- You mentioned proof earlier.

TARQUIN

I will ask you three times to link our minds. It is called the joining. You will be in my mind, and I in yours.

KEEN

-- But how do I find her?

TARQUIN

A simple matter for me. However, I will require time to scour your memories and, naturally, invite your mother forth as a corporeal being.

KEEN

-- I'll be able to talk to her?

And that's the cheese.

TARQUIN

While our minds are joined, your terrestrial body will rest, and your duplicate will move through my mind, endowed with all the abilities and limitations of physical form.

KEEN

-- But I can talk to her?

TARQUIN

The actual world won't perceive your presence because, once again, you're inside my mind.

KEEN

-- I've got a lot of questions.

TARQUIN

-- I'm picking up on that.

KEEN

Because if she can give me any identifying information, social, date of birth, I'm pretty awesome at tracking down people online -- Ones who really don't want to be found. Remember I showed you a list of names?

TARQUIN

Vaguely. Now do you agree to the joining?

KEEN

Yes. Absolutely, of course.

TARQUIN

(spreads his arms wide)
Then, whilst I search for your mother, you'll have unfettered access to my louche house of pleasures and other delights.

KEEN

And then when it's over, you'll snap your fingers or something?

TARQUIN

Yes. Something like that.

Keen's satisfied.

Odysseus returns, hiding something behind his back.

TARQUIN
 Inside my mind, you'll know me by my
 mask.

His assistant reveals a...

BIRD MASK

... Lays it on the table.

KEEN
 Okay, weird, but okay.

TARQUIN
 One cannot exist inside of one's own
 mind. -- You'd go insane. The mask
 protects me. Now...

Licks his lips.

TARQUIN
 ... Prepare yourself.

A breath of air dances along candles burning on the table.

The Party-goers drum their placemats. Make animal noises.

Keen straightens up in his chair.

Tarquin's pupils **GLOW YELLOW**.

Links hands with Keen then Odysseus.

KEEN
 (pulls away)
 H-hold up.

Tarquin's pupils dim.

Keen's hand falls away.

Quintus and Odysseus trade uneasy glances.

KEEN
 It's just... I've never given anyone
 this kind of control before.

TARQUIN
 'Tis absolute.

KEEN
 I'm... I'm just a little nervous.

TARQUIN
 How pedestrian.

KEEN

Wut?

TARQUIN

You should be terrified.

Keen senses heavy eyes upon him. Spins.

A dozen newcomers, IMMORTALS, stare back at him. The same faces from the mirror. Some sad. Some happy. Most resigned. **NONE WEAR MASKS**, while the **PARTY-GOERS DO WEAR MASKS**.

KEEN

(stands)

Wait, what? Where'd they...

Stares back at his own body, slumped in a chair.

His **EYES FROZEN**. Filled with horror.

Tarquin's lost in some sort of a trance. An eerie **YELLOW GLOW** beams from his pupils. Ecstasy chokes from his throat.

KEEN

W-what's happening?

All sounds from the natural realm lower to half volume. He falls out of time with the Party-goers moving slower. They raise their phones. Start recording Keen's body.

His face catches up to the fact he's in Tarquin's mind.

KEEN

He was supposed to ask me three times.

A **SECOND** Tarquin in a bird mask steps up from behind.

TARQUIN

(laughs)

I lied.

Keen grapples with the moment.

TARQUIN

Now, I caution you, there's one last teensy-weensy detail that I've failed to convey.

KEEN

-- You lied to me?

TARQUIN

Mere stagecraft. -- Enhances the performance, don't you think?

KEEN

-- Are you shitting me?

His head's on a swivel.

KEEN

-- What the fuck is going on?

TARQUIN

Now, now, remain calm. Breathe.

Sucking air, Keen focuses on slowing his breathing.

KEEN

Okay. Okay. This is happening. Okay.

TARQUIN

Shall we continue?

Odysseus searches Keen's face for the answer.

Keen pants. Nods.

TARQUIN

Very well. It's important that you never, and I can't stress this enough, never, ever go through a red door. You must always remain in my mind.

KEEN

(winded)
Okay, red doors, bad.

TARQUIN

Red doors are the gateway to your mind. Go through that door and you'll be lost forever, instantly. Even I can't save you from that fate.

KEEN

Don't go through the red door. Got it. What else? Is that it?

Odysseus taps his master's shoulder. Points.

TARQUIN

(disappointed)
Oh...

A **GHOSTLY MAN** in double-breasted penguin tails attacks!

Sweeps a solid **CARVING KNIFE** off the table.

TARQUIN

... And then there's Balthasar.

A raving lunatic, BALTHASAR (40s) repeatedly slashes at Tarquin. Somehow laughs and cries simultaneously.

Amuses Tarquin.

Now transparent, the blade simply passes through Tarquin.

BALTHASAR

(to Keen)

Get out! Run. I shall delay his pursuit as long as possible.

Loses steam when he realizes the blade has no effect.

TARQUIN

Oh, dear, Balthasar.

BALTHASAR

(desperate to Keen)

Take me with you.

Sharply, Tarquin flicks his eyes toward the wall.

Balthasar follows the same path, **FLYING ACROSS THE ROOM.**

And stops mid-flight! Suspended in the warm evening air.

Stunned, a couple of the Immortals stumble backward.

Oblivious to what's happening, the Party-goers move slowly, shooting pictures of Keen's body.

Tarquin shushes Balthasar.

His tortured screams fall silent.

Resigned to his fate, Balthasar drops the knife.

As it lands. Becomes solid again.

Keen picks up the knife to inspect it.

TARQUIN

Oh, he's entirely harmless. -- An old rival. -- A complete hack. And a cautionary tale of what happens when one ventures through a red door.

Balthasar's ghostly form hangs in the air.

TARQUIN

Not of this world or the other, a specter, lost in his own mind.

Atticus and Hugo burst into the room.

Both turn to Keen.

Keen drops the knife like it's riddled with typhoid.

One of the Immortals, SEBASTIAN (20s), leans close to Keen. He's young, attractive, and needs approval desperately.

SEBASTIAN

Our master's right, ya know. -- He is.

Balthasar's face twitches, swarming with ticks.

His left hand shakes uncontrollably.

Begins frothing at the mouth.

Tarquin snaps his fingers.

Balthasar **VANISHES**.

TARQUIN

Show's over.

Atticus and Hugo sag a little.

Post up at the door.

Tarquin huddles with his two henchmen.

TARQUIN

(under his breath)

I'll signal when it's time.

Steals a glance back at Keen's lifeless body in the chair.

Keen waves one hand in front of Quintus. No response.

TARQUIN

As I explained, he can't see you, my friend. You're inside of my mind.

At the table, we recognize **CLARA**, still in her **GOSSAMER GOWN**.

Her gaze bounces between Tarquin and Keen.

TARQUIN

Iubentium and chin-chin.

Obediently, all of the Immortals sip their drink.

Clara spots her chance.

Corners Keen. They speak in hushed tones.

CLARA

Balthasar was right. He's trying to
keep you here. Get out.

Her attention whips to...

SEBASTIAN

... Who overheard the whole exchange. Lowers his chalice.

Sebastian frowns at Clara, then Keen, then Clara.

She clenches his arm.

Sebastian wrestles free.

Keen's unsure what's happening.

Clara's downright certain. Prepares for the worst.

KEEN

Where's he keep the monkey's paw?

CLARA

The study. Why?

KEEN

If it really grants wishes, I don't
need Tarquin.

CLARA

-- Take me with you.

Sebastian bends his master's ear.

Tarquin wheels. His easy charm melts away.

With a mere flick of his eyes --

-- Clara flies into the wall. Lands hard. **MANACLES** appear on
her wrists and ankles. Then she disappears into nothingness.

TARQUIN

(effervescent to Keen)
Have you seen the house?

Unmoored by this new world, Keen struggles to keep it
together. A struggle he's losing. Shakes his head.

TARQUIN

Then you haven't truly lived.

Starts away.

Notices Keen hasn't moved from his body in the chair.

KEEN

Yeah, but, I mean, what do we do with... That's still me, you know.

TARQUIN

Odysseus, here, safeguards our terrestrial bodies with his life.

Begrudgingly, Odysseus flutters his hand in a so-so motion.

Atticus and Hugo remain stoic.

TARQUIN

See? No need to concern yourself in the slightest. Now, let us not tarry.

Putting his faith in Tarquin, Keen steps forward.

Carefully, scrutinizes the Immortals' faces for a clue.

They offer nothing. Hollow. Devoid of emotion.

Keen steels himself. Pauses at the door. Opens it.

The sporadic *thump* of dance music echoes down the corridor.

TARQUIN

I appreciate the vicissitude of your fortunes but this will take no time at all. Relax. Stay as long as you like.

KEEN

Let's start with your study.

The instant Keen steps out of the Great Hall:

TARQUIN

(to Atticus and Hugo)
Stay close. Be ready.

Scowls at Odysseus.

Who avoids eye contact.

TARQUIN

And look here. This time, don't let those imbeciles take selfies with me.

Party-goers crowd Tarquin's body, still in a trance.

THE CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Side by side, Keen and Tarquin stride toward the dance floor.

The threat of Atticus and Hugo trails at a distance.

KEEN

It's strange.

TARQUIN

Pray, do tell.

KEEN

How can you talk to Atticus and Hugo?

TARQUIN

To be certain, I haven't a clue.

KEEN

So they're, like, in your mind and in reality at the same time?

TARQUIN

It's just always been so. Perhaps it's because I love them both dearly, or perhaps it's because they're no longer among the living.

KEEN

Of course, they aren't.

TARQUIN

Vexing to be sure. I must link with Odysseus, however. I need him. -- He's alive. -- I've been assured.

The plodding music bangs louder with every step.

TARQUIN

Ah, but who's to say the true nature of reality?

KEEN

-- Have we passed the study yet?

THE GRAND BALLROOM

Out of time with the music, Tarquin waltzes through masked guests dancing sluggishly. He's rather accomplished.

Less inspired, Keen follows. Not dancing.

THE HALLS OF TEMPTATION

Tarquin gallops backward. A glass of wine sloshing in one hand. Guides Keen down a veritable rogues' gallery of ADDICTS and WHORES. FLUSH-FACED REVELERS spill out of STATEROOMS.

Down the hall, Atticus and Hugo cast wary eyes.

TARQUIN

"All human behavior flows from three main sources: appetites, spirit, and reasoning." -- That's Plato, you know.

KEEN

"All extremes of feeling are allied with madness."

TARQUIN

-- Virginia Woolf, indeed. A talented woman with a divine surname.

They pass open doors.

Tarquin leers inside most of them.

TARQUIN

Now as I search out your mother, I do encourage you to partake in an endless scroll of illicit experiences.

Keen's not interested in any of it.

Steps over a hungover MONK rumped on the floor.

KEEN

Maybe I should wait in your study?

TARQUIN

How positively boring! Tonight's an all-you-can-eat buffet and everything's on the menu.

MIDDLE-AGE MEN shove one another. Grappling. Brawl.

TARQUIN

But fair warning: If you die in this realm, your physical body perishes with you. So, have fun, but not too much fun. Ha!

Tarquin poses at a cracked door.

TARQUIN

Ah, now, this one's always popular.

We see a sliver of the indulgences inside. A cuddle puddle of naked bodies on a bed laid from wall to wall. A writhing knot of arms, legs, and carnal abandon.

Keen steps back.

TARQUIN

Oh, go on now. Don't be shy.

KEEN
 (scoffs)
 Me? Shy?

TARQUIN
 Been a while?

KEEN
 I do just fine, thank you.

TARQUIN
 We stock all manner of pills and
 potions around here somewhere.

Keen narrows his gaze to a sharp point.

TARQUIN
 You're unhappy with your penis.

KEEN
 Nobody's happy with their penis.

TARQUIN
 (storms away indignant)
 Speak for yourself.

Keen lingers in the doorway. Pretends he's not curious about
 what's happening inside the room.

Tarquin updates his henchmen lurking around the corner.

TARQUIN
 Apologies, gentlemen. This one's
 consuming an inordinate amount of
 time. Woefully unencumbered by a
solitary vice.

HUGO
 What does he value most?

ATTICUS
 Himself --

HUGO
 -- Woman.

TARQUIN
 Ah, yes, Mommy.

A HORSE nickers as it ambles past.

TARQUIN
 But... Would he sacrifice himself for
 her? Now there's a question.

ATTICUS

Trials?

HUGO

Test which love is greater?

TARQUIN

I love this idea. A mere moment to
fetch her from his earliest memory --

-- His pupils **GLOW YELLOW**.

In a hospital gown, the Redheaded Woman (now 17) materializes
out of thin air.

TARQUIN

Make friends but tell him nothing.
Lead him astray. -- In the opposite
direction, in fact. Your purpose is to
delay, distract until my trap is set.

While nodding, she disappears.

TARQUIN

And let the trials begin!

A THIN MAN, wearing a bunny head and no pants, wanders past.

From the doorway, Keen peeks inside the orgy room.

Over his shoulder, Tarquin startles him --

TARQUIN

How do you mean? Is it weird?

KEEN

Huh?

TARQUIN

Oddly shaped or something?

Grabs for Keen's crotch.

He spanks Tarquin's hand away.

TARQUIN

Well, now I'm curious.

Keen storms off.

TARQUIN

(crows)
Oh, you're really no fun at all.

At the end of the hallway, the Redheaded Woman breezes past.

Keen's drawn to her. Recognize her. Maybe from a dream.

She rounds the corner.

Atticus and Hugo aren't far behind them.

Entirely satisfied with himself, Tarquin's grin tightens.

-- Until a BLACK KITTEN scampers past.

Pursued by a laughing little girl, ANNABELLE (5), wearing a onesie swimsuit and arm floaties.

TARQUIN
Zounds and gadzooks.

AROUND THE CORNER

Keen freezes.

Shocked, he stares down an empty hall.

The kitten and Annabelle scurry past and into...

THE CAT ROOM

Tripping balls, ACE (20), an emaciated, shirtless junkie, catches his arm.

ACE
He... He's tryin' ta keep us here.

KEEN
I know. Where's his study?

Ace struggles to dig words out of his head until he spots --
-- Tarquin rushing toward them.

Aces can't stumble away fast enough.

TARQUIN
(out of breath)
Goodness, you shouldn't have borne witness to any of this. She shouldn't even be on this side of the house. An error on my part.

As he trots to the Cat Room, the meowing grows louder. Perhaps dozens of cats inside.

TARQUIN
This is most unexpected. She's oh so special to me. -- Oh, Annabelle, dear!

Alone, he continues into the room...

... When a familiar tabby cat scurries into the hall.

Leaps straight into Keen's arms.

Tarquin returns with a shattering beauty, Annabelle (now 30) in tow, wearing the same onesie swimsuit and arm floaties.

Tarquin yanks the cat out of Keen's arms.

TARQUIN

As I cautioned you earlier, they're not really cats.

KEEN

I'm afraid to ask.

TARQUIN

Forfeit to my dragons' needs, I'm afraid.

Keen snatches the cat right back.

TARQUIN

Go on, make them hungrier.

Keen and Annabelle trade smiles.

She sparkles for him.

TARQUIN

-- She's not for you.

Tarquin grabs Annabelle's arm.

TARQUIN

Now, I implore you. Go get yourself into some proper trouble whilst I search out your mother. And then, of course, you need to confess all the details of your odious manipulations. The ones that endlessly engage lost souls with social media.

KEEN

But the study...

TARQUIN

-- Come along, Annabelle.

(over his shoulder to Keen)

Oh, and do not let me catch you in the badminton room.

KEEN

What happens there?

TARQUIN

Even less than in my study.

Hand-in-hand, Tarquin and Annabelle skip away.

Annabelle sings like a little girl.

ANNABELLE

*This old man / he played four / He
played knick-knack on my door / With a
knick-knack paddywhack...*

Keen snuggles his new friend. Both *purr*.

The cat jumps out of his arms and scampers into...

THE PUZZLE ROOM

... Keen chases him inside. The door slams shut.

Atticus and Hugo block the door, guarding any escape.

INSIDE

It's spacious with two adjoining chambers. The cat circles.

Keen corrals his little buddy and scoops him into the crook of his arm. Keen turns.

The door to the hallway...

VANISHES

... He can go left or go right. The choice made for him. The left option, now a **SOLID WALL**.

Keen moves right.

Nervously, bounces the cat in his arm.

KEEN

Don't worry. I gotcha.

Checks over his shoulder.

The other doorway, now a **SOLID WALL**.

Perplexed, Keen checks his phone for a signal. No bars.

-- A low, ominous noise *grinds* louder.

The walls slowly converge. Only one has turned into a solid **WALL OF FIRE** and the other a solid **WALL OF ICE**.

Shocked, Keen backs up to the window.

Struggles to open it.

Little by little, the walls of fire and ice squeeze tighter.

Keen muscles open the window.

Pokes his head out.

It's a three-story drop.

No ledge. No escape.

A distant wolf *howls* at the full moon.

Sends the cat squirrely in his arms.

Keen ducks back inside. Sniffs. Sniffs.

KEEN

That's a wooden wall. There, uh...
There should be smoke.

Keen chances his hand in the roiling flames.

Eases it back. Unscathed.

KEEN

(to the cat)
You trust me, right?

Closes his eyes. Walks through the wall of fire and into...

INT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Startled, the Redheaded Woman spins to face Keen.

REDHEADED WOMAN

Oh! Where'd you two come from?

We remember this room with Renaissance furniture and
vertically striped wallpaper.

The Redheaded Woman dons a more-covering hospital robe.

KEEN

I, uh... there's this room. There were
doors. -- They kept disappearing. And,
and the walls, well, the walls --

REDHEADED WOMAN

-- The puzzle room.

KEEN
Yeah, sounds about right --

REDHEADED WOMAN
-- It's called the puzzle room.

KEEN
If you say so.

REDHEADED WOMAN
Ya went right, didn't ya?

KEEN
Basically.

REDHEADED WOMAN
It's left, left, then another left.

Reaches for Keen's fuzzy buddy.

REDHEADED WOMAN
Ooo, can I hold him? Or is he a her?

KEEN
(offers the cat)
He's a stray. Just started following
me around.

REDHEADED WOMAN
Aww, he "wikes" you.

The cat leaps to the floor.

KEEN
I'm Keen.

REDHEADED WOMAN
Oh, I know who ya are.

KEEN
Really?

REDHEADED WOMAN
You've been with Tarquin all night.

KEEN
Yeah, that's right.

REDHEADED WOMAN
Ya shouldn't be here.

KEEN
Eh, why do people keep saying that?

REDHEADED WOMAN

Because he's not what ya think he is.

The cat saunters to a wall filled with a **DOZEN MASKS**.

The Redheaded Woman gestures to an empty hook on the wall.

REDHEADED WOMAN

When that one's missing... you-know-who's creepin' around with the bird mask on.

KEEN

Hold it... You only exist in his mind.

REDHEADED WOMAN

Maybe. -- I really shouldn't be tellin' ya any of this stuff.

KEEN

How come?

REDHEADED WOMAN

Cuz he's gonna be pissed. Here it is. He told me to lie to you, but I'm not gonna do that. -- I can get ya out of here if ya want.

KEEN

No, he's doing something for me.

REDHEADED WOMAN

Yeah, I know.

KEEN

-- Searching for someone.

REDHEADED WOMAN

Someone special?

KEEN

My mother.

REDHEADED WOMAN

Aww. Do ya love her?

KEEN

Of course I love her!

REDHEADED WOMAN

Then say it.

KEEN

Say what?

REDHEADED WOMAN

Say ya love your mom.

KEEN

Who doesn't love their mother?

REDHEADED WOMAN

Say it like ya mean it. Like she was standin' right here.

KEEN

Well, I built the best digital empire in the world to find her.

REDHEADED WOMAN

Oh, well, wow, hey, when ya lay it on like that...

KEEN

-- Serious question: Who are you?

REDHEADED WOMAN

And how's that whole digital thing workin' out for ya, huh? Got ya hangin' out with that ghoul Tarquin.

KEEN

Do you know where he is?

REDHEADED WOMAN

That's so the last place ya wanna be.

KEEN

Do you know where his study is?

She shifts her weight.

With a glint of mischief in her eyes.

REDHEADED WOMAN

What for?

KEEN

There's a monkey's paw in his study.

REDHEADED WOMAN

(matter-of-fact)

I know that.

KEEN

-- You do?

REDHEADED WOMAN

And lucky for us, this place is built like Swiss cheese.

(MORE)

REDHEADED WOMAN (cont'd)
 There's secret passages all over the
 place. -- Even ones he don't know
 about.

KEEN
 -- Does it work?

REDHEADED WOMAN
 The monkey's paw?

KEEN
 -- Three wishes, right?

REDHEADED WOMAN
 Let's find out.

KEEN
 -- Wait, what's your name again?

REDHEADED WOMAN
 Oh, uh, sorry, I'm Rose.

KEEN
 You look very familiar, Rose.

Rose gathers up his outstretched hands with both of hers.

ROSE
 This, like, really means a lot. Ya
 have no idea.

KEEN
 You're right. I have no idea.

ROSE
 We should go.

Shows him past a **COLOSSAL MIRROR** in a baroque frame.

Movement catches her eye.

Keen's too.

Dumbfounded, they slouch before the mirror.

ROSE
 That's so weird.

KEEN
 What's happening?

ROSE
 Come to think of it, I've only seen
 that happen with one other person...

In the mirror, Keen's head cycles through a **MYRIAD OF FACES**.

Keen searches her face for the answer.

ROSE
... Tarquin.

They turn back to the mirror. Keen's **TRAPPED IN A BOX** again.
Trapped inside the mirror frame.

KEEN
(exultant)
The only other person, huh?

ROSE
If ya consider him an actual human
person, which I don't. Let's go.

KEEN
There!

Points out Tarquin. One of the faces cycling in the mirror.

Rose wrenches Keen's wrist.

ROSE
Let's go.

In front of a bookcase, Rose debates, then tips three books
in a sequence she's obviously done before.

Fine dust puffs into the air.

The edge of the bookcase springs open. Reveals a hidden exit.

The two step inside and disappear as we return to the mirror.

In the reflection, **TARQUIN** spider-walks across the ceiling.

THE SECRET PASSAGE

Rose sees Keen down a spiral, wrought-iron staircase.

It empties into an arched stone corridor.

As the two turn left, the tabby cat trots forward.

Rose flips a rusted metal latch and hefts open a mammoth
SECRET DOOR into...

INT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - TABLINUM/STUDY - NIGHT

Dark wood paneling. Vaulted ceiling. Bookcases of ancient
texts. A stained-glass window with the Chi Rho upside down.

Rose locks the **DOUBLE DOORS** to the main entrance.

ROSE
Okay, so, probably not you, but if he
finds me in here --

KEEN
-- What, he'll kill you?

Spins a globe from some forgotten time. About a hundred
thumbtacks sticking out of it.

ROSE
Believe me, there's waaay worse stuff
than killin' me. -- Gimme your shoe.

KEEN
What do you want with my shoe?

ROSE
To prop open the door, duh.

The door closes really **SLOWLY**.

ROSE
-- Our escape plan?

KEEN
Use a book or something.

ROSE
(studies the books)
Hmmm, all these look super old.

Muscles the secret door open again.

And it starts closing again really slowly.

ROSE
C'mon, I can't open it from this side.

KEEN
Basically, my shoes are worth more
than my phone.

Flashes his cell phone.

Amazed, she shuffles to Keen.

ROSE
That's a phone?

KEEN
Tell me who you are really?

ROSE
Nuh-uh. Ya gotta guess.

KEEN
Uh... Why?

ROSE
Cuz that's the deal. I can't tell ya.
Ya gotta guess.

KEEN
Oh, it's like a puzzle.

ROSE
-- Ya really oughta know this one.

KEEN
So, this whole house's one big puzzle?
-- I'm good at puzzles.

ROSE
More like a torture chamber. Gimme.

Sticks out her open palm. Stubbornly, holds it there.

KEEN
(scoffs)
I want it back --

ROSE
-- You'll get it back.

Before it closes, props open the secret door with his Oxford.

ROSE
-- Ta-da.

KEEN
So where's the monkey's paw?

Without a clue, Rose shrugs.

KEEN
I thought you knew where it was?

ROSE
I just said he keeps it in here.

-- Exasperated, Keen roots through towers of papers stacked on Tarquin's desk then rifles through drawers.

-- Rose opens cabinets.

MOMENTS LATER

-- Both of them search the bookcases.

ROSE

So, when ya meet her, what're ya gonna tell her? What're ya gonna ask her?

That's still a heavy lift.

KEEN

I think I want her to be proud of me.

ROSE

I'm sure she already is. Bunches.

Keen stares into a **CRYSTAL BALL** on Tarquin's desk.

Touches it.

BALTHASAR'S FACE lunges forward inside the crystal ball.

Holy smoke! Keen backpedals.

ROSE

For example, stuff that's worse than death. I'm for sure there's more.

Taps the crystal ball.

CLARA appears slumped over and shackled to a stone wall.

ROSE

See, smarty pants? What'd I tell ya?

KEEN

Where are they?

ROSE

The catacombs under the house. Super, extra, creepy place --

-- A **RAVEN** shoots through an open window.

Startled, Keen and Rose duck down.

Trapped. Confused. The bird bounces off walls.

Fights for its freedom.

Settles on the upstairs banister. Flaps hard.

Calls out. Again and again. *Caw. Caw.*

ROSE

Someone's gonna hear.

KEEN
Shoo, bird. Shoo!

Waves his hands.

The raven's head bobs left, then right.

Launches straight for the open window.

But the instant it **FLIES OUT**. Another raven **FLIES IN**.

Or could it be the same bird?

Keen and Rose trade bewildered glances.

KEEN AND ROSE
Whoa.

Confused, the raven bounces off a wall.

Settles on Tarquin's desk.

Oh, but that bird's a talker. Mocks them. *Caw. Caw.*

ROSE
Shush! Quiet, bird.

KEEN
(scoffs)
Where's that cat?

ROSE
That monster would eat a cat.

Men murmur in the corridor. Maybe Atticus and Hugo.

Rose spins to face the double doors.

The handle rattles.

Rose grabs Keen's wrist.

KEEN
No, they can take me to Tarquin. But
you got to get outta here. Go.

Pounding on the double doors. *Bam. Bam. Bam.*

The commotion unnerves the raven.

Flaps its wings. *Squawks.*

Rose hugs Keen. Squeezes every last bit out of it.

Makes her escape.

Bam. Bam. Bam.

The secret door closes. Really slowly.

In a vain attempt to close it faster, Keen shoulders the secret door.

Slowly.

Slowly.

Inch by agonizing inch, the secret door creeps closer.

KEEN
(to the corridor)
Hold on! Hold on! I'm coming.

ATTICUS (O.S.)
Who is in there?

HUGO (O.S.)
No one should be there.

Atticus and Hugo start breaking down the double doors.

KEEN
Just-just gimme a minute!

The double doors crack and bow.

The raven screams louder. *CAW! CAW!*

Keen's shoe flies out of the secret passage just before...

THE SECRET DOOR

... Seals shut.

Keen spins as...

ATTICUS AND HUGO

... Bust down the double doors and tumble inside.

The raven rises in the air. *Shrieks.*

Everyone cowers.

KEEN
You see what I'm dealing with in here?
This-this lunatic bird.

Wearing the bird mask, Tarquin sweeps in with Odysseus.

TARQUIN

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, what are you doing in here?

KEEN

Trying to get that thing to shut up.

Menacing overhead, the raven CAWS.

Tarquin points at the bird.

It **FREEZES**.

Tarquin squeezes a fist.

The raven **DISAPPEARS**.

Reappears on the desk. Stuffed and mounted.

TARQUIN

There now.

Everyone stands a little straighter.

Relaxes a bit.

TARQUIN

(to Atticus and Hugo)

My gratitude, gentlemen. Well done.

Atticus and Hugo lumber back to the corridor.

Tarquin strokes the raven's head.

TARQUIN

Unfortunately, I bear poor tidings.

KEEN

-- My mother?

TARQUIN

A stubborn old witch, disfigured and world-weary.

KEEN

-- You found her.

TARQUIN

Indeed. And she's not sneaking up on anyone with that halitosis. Temper your expectations, my friend.

KEEN

-- She's not coming.

TARQUIN

Ha! You're so gullible.

Silently, Odysseus guffaws.

Slaps his knee.

TARQUIN

Actually, she's quite a lovely woman.
And hooray for me, I've persuaded her
to visit tomorrow afternoon.

With a flourish, genuflects into a grand sweeping bow.

Spots...

Keen's shoeless foot.

TARQUIN

Oh, good for you. You did have an
adventure. One that cost you a single
shoe. Disappointing or is it just me?

Keen steadies himself on the edge of the desk before slipping
on his shoe.

Jostles a stack of papers, revealing...

THE MONKEY'S PAW

... Peeking out from under the pile.

Keen spots it. Has anyone else? His eyes dart.

Blocks Tarquin's view.

Oblivious, Tarquin cups one hand to his ear.

Furrows his brow.

TARQUIN

-- I beg your pardon?

KEEN

I didn't say anything.

TARQUIN

Oh, no, not you.

Pushes past Keen, easing him away from the desk.

Keen broods over his options. Decidedly few.

Nonchalantly, Keen scooches back closer to the monkey's paw.

From the bookshelf, Tarquin removes an ancient **TOME** bound in goat hide.

Cracks it open.

TARQUIN
(talks to the pages)
Oh, really... Go on... The dickens you say? And then she did what? Oh, thank you, my loyal friend.

Tarquin closes the tome and tosses it onto the desk. *Thump.*

The inscription on the cover reads "Book of Secrets."

The papers shift, **exposing** the monkey's paw.

Keen rests his hand over it. But did Tarquin notice?

Tarquin's smile doesn't quite reach his eyes.

Odysseus wants no part of what's next. Slips away.

TARQUIN
My. My. My-my-my. Haven't we been a busy little beaver?

Fondles the lip to the secret entrance.

The crushing weight of Tarquin's silence hangs over Keen.

Immortals file into the doorway. Dare not enter.

Anxiously, Keen double-takes the doorway.

In the back row, Rose hops up and down, struggling to see over the Immortals in front.

Covertly, Keen signals to Rose to stop hopping.

KEEN
Then until tomorrow?

TARQUIN
Oh, you're always in such a rush.

Furtively, Immortals shake their heads at Keen.

Tarquin spots them. Snarls. And with his mind --

-- The double doors slam closed. *Bang. Bang.*

Keen slips the monkey's paw in his pocket.

KEEN

It's... It's not like you can keep me here. -- I mean, can you?

Without fanfare, Tarquin *snaps* his fingers.

His eyes don't glow this time.

TARQUIN

I wouldn't hear of it.

Keen inspects his hands. Touches his chest. Surveys the room. Nothing appears different at all. Just like before.

KEEN

I... I would've been missed.

TARQUIN

Spot on! Men like us...

Keen starts for the door, but every time Tarquin interjects a new thought, it stops Keen cold in his tracks.

TARQUIN

But do bear in mind your pledge.

KEEN

-- Right. Right.

TARQUIN

I will deliver your mother. You will return to discuss your tricks that enslave human attention.

KEEN

-- Yeah, of course.

TARQUIN

Tut-tut. Until I'm satisfied.

On his desk, a **BEETLE** struggles to stand. Tiny feet flailing.

Tarquin crushes it with his finger.

TARQUIN

You see, I have an insatiable hunger, and there's but one way to satisfy it.

Licks his finger clean.

Keen cocks his head. Not certain they're still talking about digital advertising.

THE GRAND BALLROOM

Silent. Empty. A shambles of after-party detritus.

THE GREAT HALL

Silent. Empty. Not a scrap of food or drink unsampled.

THE TOP OF THE PIT

As we approach the stone-circled lip, sounds arise: soft flesh being *ripped* apart and bones *crunching*. We tumble over the side and we're swallowed by the charcoal abyss.

INT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - THE VESTIBULE - MORNING

Odysseus escorts Keen, a bit tousled, to the foyer.

From deeper in the house, Tarquin peacocks into view. Steps into a shaft of daylight, the dawn breaking through a window.

Busts out a sloppy grin.

TARQUIN

(bellows)

As I was saying, my dear friend, don't forget to live. And salve!

As Keen leaves...

... Tarquin deflates.

His charming veneer falls away and eyes **GLOW** for an instant.

Tarquin doffs the bird mask while striding toward Odysseus.

TARQUIN

Oh, but I like this one. Lies even more than me. -- Lies to himself. What's not to like?

Odysseus disagrees with each of his master's pronouncements.

TARQUIN

-- Oh, I do not say that about all of them. I can have friends, you know. I think. Yes, I know. He is a bit of a dullard. However, he does appreciate, the *je ne sais quoi* of manufacturing needs in simple creatures.

Quintus, Atticus, and Hugo join them at the window.

QUINTUS

So, we takin' an "L" on this one?

TARQUIN
Oh, he'll be back. He stole my
monkey's paw. He wants her bad.

ATTICUS
-- A powerful relic?

TARQUIN
-- Quintus?

QUINTUS
I snagged it on eBay last week. -- One
of those two-for-one flash sales.

Everyone chuckles.

TARQUIN
Oh, who knows? In another life, Keen
and I might have been acquittances...
kindred spirits... brothers in arms.

Holding up both hands, Odysseus protests.

TARQUIN
I know, I know, you don't do feelings.
-- Nevertheless, the trials continue.

INT. BASTILLE WORLD HEADQUARTERS - KEEN'S SUITE - MORNING

Bone-tired, Keen wears the monkey's paw around his neck.

Confides in Lilith:

KEEN
Lilith, it's real.

LILITH
What's real?

KEEN
He's real.

LILITH
The mind reader?

KEEN
I was inside of his mind.

LILITH
-- You look tired.

KEEN
I'm exhausted. I was up all night.

LILITH
-- You were hallucinating.

KEEN
I'm telling you...

LILITH
And what is that disgusting thing
around your neck?

KEEN
It's, uh... It's a monkey's paw.

LILITH
-- Not a real one, I hope.

KEEN
It, like, grants wishes.

LILITH
-- Gross.

KEEN
I can wish for my mother.

LILITH
Then why haven't you?

KEEN
Because it's kind of a big deal for
you. I wanted you to be here to see
it. This is gonna make you a partner.

LILITH
Are you sure you're ready?

KEEN
I think so.

LILITH
Have you figured out what you're going
to tell her?

KEEN
Not exactly.

LILITH
Fine, just do it. It's not gonna work.

Keen closes his eyes. Becomes calm. Rubs the paw.
Nothing.

Lilith crosses her arms.

KEEN

-- Hold on, hold on, maybe I'm supposed to say it out loud.

Rubs again.

KEEN

I wish my mother was here... Send me my mother, oh, monkey's paw... I command you... I command you.

Opens one eye. Then the other.

KEEN

Oh, of course, this thing doesn't work. You can't trust anyone --

LILITH

-- I hope you didn't give him money --

KEEN

-- You know what I had to do to smuggle this thing out of his house?

Hurls the monkey's paw into the garbage.

Schleps over to a steaming coffee pot. Pours a cup.

LILITH

Have you heard from our attorney?

KEEN

I'm barely hanging on. Just tell me.

Lilith swipes the coffee cup from him.

Assuming she wanted a cup for herself, he pours another.

Nope. She takes that one too.

LILITH

He took a call from the authorities, a very nice woman. She said we have until midnight to give it back.

Keen pulls out a RUBY AND DIAMOND RIVIÈRE NECKLACE from under his shirt.

KEEN

Mine! This is mine, and I can prove it. I'm going back this afternoon --

LILITH

-- What? No.

KEEN

She's gonna be there.

LILITH

You need to go back to bed.

KEEN

(sighs)

You were right the first time.

LILITH

-- That you look tired?

KEEN

No, that I'm not ready. I'm a mess. I need a shave. Look at these rags I'm wearing. I... I... I gotta get ready.

LILITH

You know I don't believe any of this.

KEEN

I'm going back.

LILITH

We'll see.

KEEN

You can't stop me.

LILITH

Can't I?

KEEN

(rambling)

And then I gotta find out everything I can about her, and then... and then --

LILITH

-- Okay, you're spinning out.

Shepherds Keen to an inviting chair.

Where he scrolls through a list of names on his phone.

KEEN

And then I gotta get the thing --

LILITH

-- The identifying information --

KEEN

-- That! Yes, that. So I can track her down online. You're Lilith, right?

LILITH

I want you to go home and get some sleep.

KEEN

I can't sleep. I have nightmares.

LILITH

I can't even... -- I know I'm going to regret this, but what nightmares?

Off Keen's puzzled face --

A QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS: DISJOINTED NIGHTMARE IMAGES

Annabelle sings while:

-- Guests gorge themselves.

-- Dance.

-- Drink.

-- Tarquin cackles manically.

BACK TO SCENE

KEEN

You wouldn't get it.

LILITH

You have to sleep.

KEEN

I'm, um... I'm having trouble telling dreams from... from...

A QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS: MORE DISJOINTED NIGHTMARE IMAGES

-- The raven screeches.

-- A wall of flames flies closer.

-- A Komodo dragon's tongue flicks.

-- A swarm of cicadas envelop Rose's face.

ROSE

... From not dreams?

BACK TO SCENE

LILITH

... From reality?

KEEN
-- That's it.

LILITH
(pecks on her phone)
I'm having someone bring a car around,
and I want you to go home and try and
get some sleep.

KEEN
M'kay, call me later.

LILITH
I'm not going to call. You need to
sleep.

KEEN
I need to sleep. -- No, I need to get
ready. I'm not nearly ready, Lilith.

Heads for a **RED** door.

Reaches to turn the handle.

Lilith takes his hand like he's a schoolboy.

LILITH
This way.

Escorts him to the elevators.

Mystified, Keen double-checks over his shoulder.

KEEN
Has that always been there?

LILITH
Uh-huh, it's a door --

KEEN
-- A red door?

LILITH
That's right.

KEEN
Do we really need it?

LILITH
(talks to her phone)
We're on our way down.

Keen and Lilith step deep inside the elevator.

The doors squeeze tight.

EXT. BASTILLE WORLD HEADQUARTERS - PLAZA - DAY

On their way to a waiting SUV, Keen and Lilith pass faces. Every one a **50-YEAR-OLD WOMAN WITH RED HAIR**.

Alarmed, only Keen notices the pattern.

Freezes. Stares across the street.

A **REDHEADED MOTHER** (22) leads her **REDHEADED SON** (5) by the hand. With **SCARECROW BUTTON EYES**, they stare back at Keen.

He gasps. Chokes back tears.

Lilith hustles him away.

EXT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - PARTERRE - DAY

Tarquin sips espresso at the edge of an embroiderer garden.

INT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - PARLOR - LATER

Tarquin snips the stem of a Gerber daisy.

Arranges it with others in a crystal vase.

INT. GENTLEMEN'S EMPORIUM - DAY

A **BARBER** (80) slathers shaving cream across Keen's jaw.

Lilith frets behind them. Paces.

KEEN

What about the sister-thing, Mack's lead? -- One of 'em wanted money?

LILITH

Funny story there: Evidently, Simon brought the money in unmarked, non-sequential bills. Hid it in a secret compartment in his bag.

KEEN

-- I bet the T.S.A. loved that.

LILITH

Yeah, I got an earful. I was Mack's one phone call last night.

KEEN

So when do we talk to fake Grandma?

LILITH

(heavy sigh)

She's local. I'm doing it right after this. And that's what's going to lead us to your birth mother, not these ghost stories of yours.

The Barber slaps Keen's cheeks with bracing aftershave --
-- His eyes bulge.

KEEN

Holy crackers, man. What's in that?

LILITH

-- Holy water?

The Barber whips the cape away. *Snaps* it.

Keen rises from the barber chair.

KEEN

We're gonna find her one way or another, Lilith, and then I'm gonna make you partner.

Admires his reflection in the mirror.

Fishes out his wallet.

KEEN

(hands the Barber cash)
See you again next week?

LILITH

What, no tip?

KEEN

You know I don't tip.

LILITH

Do you even know his name?

Keen blanks. Doesn't even offer a guess.

KEEN

If you re-stripe your parking lot east to west rather than north to south, you'll get two extra spots out of it.

LILITH

That's not a tip.

KEEN

Notice what he's charging for parking?

Lilith makes for the door.

KEEN

How much money do you just give away
every day?

Begrudgingly, Keen finds a TWENTY in his wallet.

A MALE HAND plucks the bill outta Keen's grip.

The Barber is now **TARQUIN** with his shit-eating grin.

Keen blinks hard.

Jolted back to reality, it's the Barber again.

INT. OLD-WORLD MEN'S SUIT SHOP - LARGE FITTING ROOM - DAY

In full view of Lilith, Keen stands in front of a tri-fold dressing mirror in his boxers and Oxfords. Files his nails.

Wears the ruby and diamond necklace around his neck.

A proper English TAILOR (60s) pops into the next room.

KEEN

... But I'm not even sure how much
time I'll have with her.

LILITH

Then start with what's most important.

KEEN

Right, the identifying information --

LILITH

-- No, what you really want to know.

With a pristine suit in one arm, the Tailor returns.

TAILOR

Possibly, madam would be more
comfortable in the next room?

LILITH

-- Pfft, I had brothers who couldn't
operate doors. This is nothing.

Keen hops into the slacks.

TAILOR

Feminine adornments on gentlemen are
becoming quite fashionable again.

(MORE)

TAILOR (cont'd)
 (inspects the necklace)
 Very old... Glorious craftsmanship.

KEEN
 (ponder the cuff length)
 Hmm, a little less break?

TAILOR
 Very good. And if you don't mind me
 saying: You have something quite rare.

Suspicious, Keen stuffs the necklace under his shirt.

TAILOR
 Someone you trust.

They all pinch tiny smiles.

Keen shimmies out of the trousers.

The Tailor collects them and leaves to adjust the length.

LILITH
 ... Or you could start with what you
 want her to know about you. Be honest
 with her. It's not a bad thing to let
 someone know who you really are. I'd
 even say sometimes it's relief.

KEEN
 Would you say I'm a good man?

LILITH
 Is this gonna affect my bonus?

KEEN
 See, my best friend doesn't even know.

LILITH
 If you say so, boss.

KEEN
 Then how would you describe me?

LILITH
 After some of the morally bankrupt
 shit we've done serving clients...?

Lilith struggles to find the right words.

That stings.

KEEN
 So, I'm not a good man? Lilith, I need
 you to level with me.

LILITH

I've always found your moral ambiguity one of our company's strongest selling points.

KEEN

For future reference, there're only two acceptable answers to that question: Yes or lie.

INT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - GREAT HALL - LATER

A violinist, SUKI (25), captivates an intimate gathering of GUESTS. All of them fresh faces.

She performs the prelude *Obsession from Sonata No. 2* by Eugene Ysaÿe and finishes with a flourish, eliciting...

APPLAUSE

Odysseus escorts Keen into the rear of the room and discretely points out...

... Tarquin seated in the front row.

Gracefully turning as he rises, Tarquin removes his wide-brim Cavalier hat. Plumed with an ostrich feather, of course.

He wears a finely-tailored suit and the **BIRD MASK**.

TARQUIN

(jovial to Keen)

Chapeau, mon ami. And thank you for honoring your vow by returning.

KEEN

So where is she?

TARQUIN

Ah, but first, allow me to introduce Suki. -- A virtuoso to be certain.

Suki offers a stage bow.

TARQUIN

I've reserved you a seat beside me.

Keen sweeps the small gathering for his mother, or perhaps an Immortal since Tarquin's wearing the bird mask.

KEEN

You know what I'm here for. And what's going on with the mask?

TARQUIN

Oh, this old thing? I thought it added some fun. -- Does it displease you?

Removes the bird mask.

He looks 20 years younger, maybe 40, like the circus banner.

TARQUIN

Or perhaps you prefer one of these?

Removes the mask, now he looks like the Duchess.

Removes the mask, now he looks like a Komodo dragon.

Removes that one, and he's back to the Tarquin we remember.

TARQUIN

You really don't know how to have fun, do you?

Piping and tittering from the guests.

Odysseus glowers. Collects masks off the floor.

Tarquin realizes they're holding up the recital.

TARQUIN

Oh, forgive me, Suki. We're being rather rude.

(to Keen)

I must hear her finish. However...

Grins. Tugs his ear.

TARQUIN

... Our guest of honor has arrived.

KEEN

Did she... Did she ask about me? You know, what'd she say? -- About me?

TARQUIN

Slow down, slow down, my friend. One word at a time.

KEEN

I-I know it's a lot, it's just... -- I have so many questions. Plus, there's a bit of a time crunch this time.

TARQUIN

Then we'll return to the joining as soon as the recital ends. Odysseus!

(MORE)

TARQUIN (cont'd)
 See that our guest is comfortable in
 the library.
 (gleefully to Keen)
 I shan't be long.

Shaking his head, Odysseus escorts Keen away.

Tarquin pulls a hearty breath.

TARQUIN
 Ah, isn't the foul stench of obsession
 simply intoxicating?
 (to Suki)
 My dear, if you please...

Suki resumes playing.

Her dancing bow warms the cold bones of Tarquin's study.

Eyelids closed, Tarquin sways one hand to the melody.

Checks over his shoulder to see whether Keen has left.

Removes yet another mask, revealing he's been wearing the
BIRD MASK all along. His tongue darts out to lick his lips.

THE PARLOR - SAME

The tabby cat studies...

... A wall filled with a dozen masks.

We move closer to an empty hook where one's missing.

INT./EXT. VIOLET'S MODEST HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Nothing's been updated since the 1970s.

A crucifix over the door frame.

Clinging to the refrigerator with magnets, "thank you"
 letters written by children read like warm hugs.

In a floral dress, the grandmother, VIOLET (70s) fusses over
 a plate of cookies. This is sister #2. Folds her apron.

She takes a chair at the kitchen table. Doesn't know what to
 do with her hands. Rubs her thighs.

The doorbell rings. She stands.

Outside, Lilith waits on the stoop.

INT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - LIBRARY - DAY

From the hallway, Odysseus closes the weighty wooden door.

KA-THUNK

Pensive, Keen cranes his neck as he turns.

Did Odysseus just lock him inside?

Next door, Suki's violin plays faint but clear.

Deep in the library, a **LECTERN** slides back to reveal an opening in the stone floor.

ROSE (O.S.)
Hey! Hey, Keen!

Tentative, he shuffles over.

Peers into the shaft.

Can't make out anything through the darkness.

Rose pops her head out of the hole.

He backpedals.

ROSE
What the heck are ya doin' here?

KEEN
What am I doing here? What are you
doing here?

Rose scrambles up the shaft ladder. Still wearing her hospital gown and robe, she confronts Keen.

KEEN
I mean, if I'm able to see you...

ROSE
That's right. You never left his mind.

Blood drains from Keen's face.

Second-guesses everything.

ROSE
You have no idea how much danger
you're in. -- Have ya seen a red door?

KEEN
I thought I was hallucinating.

Her face crumples in pain.

KEEN

One time. -- At work.

ROSE

Good, that's good.

KEEN

Why?

ROSE

It means ya still have time. Ya start seein' red doors in here, you're in big trouble. That's when he has ya.

The tumblers all lock into place for Keen.

Emphatically, she nods.

ROSE

Okay, here's what's going on. The longer ya stay, the tighter Tarquin's grip on ya. And when it gets strong enough, he turns ya into an Immortal.

KEEN

Tell me what that means.

ROSE

You'll start seein' red doors, then they're all red doors. I've been tryin' to tell ya, ya can't trust him.

KEEN

No, that can't be right.

ROSE

That's why he brought me here.

KEEN

Why'd he bring you here?

ROSE

I know your mother.

KEEN

He said she's coming.

ROSE

Yeah, I know, but it's a trap. Ya gotta get out of here.

KEEN

So she's not coming?

ROSE
Ya gotta leave now.

KEEN
No, I got too many questions.

ROSE
There's no time for questions.

THE STUDY

In absolute bliss, Tarquin thrills to every note...
... That Suki plays on her violin.

THE LIBRARY

KEEN
If you knew my mother...

ROSE
(sighs)
Yes.

KEEN
... Tell me about her, Rose.

ROSE
Well... her name... Her name was Rose.

Keen unravels in every way imaginable.

ROSE
(pleads)
I'm so sorry. I wanted to meet ya so
bad, I told him I'd do anything.

Rose tries not to cry.

Keen tries not to cry.

ROSE
This is me, the worst day of my life.
The day I gave ya away.

INT. VIOLET'S MODEST HOME - KITCHEN -DAY

Recording, Lilith's PHONE rests on the table.

Lilith and Violet seated across from each other.

VIOLET
I'm not sure this was a good idea.

LILITH

I know. But a lot is riding on this, Violet. For everyone involved.

VIOLET

-- Including you?

Begrudgingly, Lilith nods.

Waits out an excruciating lull.

VIOLET

I suppose you already talked to my half-sister. -- Don't believe a word she says.

LILITH

Of course.

VIOLET

-- I'm her mama. I'd know.

Crosses her arms.

VIOLET

Lord bless her, she wasn't well, my baby girl. The doctors said it was early onset schizophrenia.

LILITH

-- Oh, I'm so sorry.

VIOLET

She was so young, just starting life. We couldn't do anything for her, me and my ex. You gotta understand, we didn't know what to do. All the screaming and voices in her head...

LILITH

-- No one's blaming you here.

VIOLET

They came highly recommended, awards and such. We checked references. They just wanted it all to go away.

LILITH

Wanted what to go away? Violet?

Waits for Violet, lost in a tortured reverie.

LILITH

What happened?

VIOLET

She got pregnant. -- You have to understand, it wasn't her fault.

LILITH

Someone took advantage of her?

VIOLET

They wouldn't admit to anything. Like I said. They wanted it to go away.

LILITH

Who? Were there records? A settlement?

Violet's indignation cuts through her pain.

VIOLET

There was no settlement. I wanted the boy. I was gonna raise him. But we were declared unfit on account of my ex. I don't wanna get into all that.

LILITH

-- No, of course, not.

VIOLET

It was just an excuse. My step-sister didn't want him. She wanted money.

LILITH

Did she sue?

VIOLET

Heavens no. You met her. Poor, dumb, and greedy, a real character trifecta.

Methodically, rips a cookie apart, piece by piece.

VIOLET

It was a doctor or someone important. They just wanted it all to go away. I looked for him. -- I did. But they made darn sure I never found him.

LILITH

My records say you volunteer at the youth center. You're there every day.

VIOLET

Nearly forty years. We work with high-risk children and their families.

LILITH

Bet you saved a lot of children.

VIOLET
It'll never be enough.

INT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - LIBRARY - DAY

Keen teeters between disbelief and confusion.

KEEN
This can't be happening. I-I just
found you. Why's he doing all this?

ROSE
It's how he eats. He wants your mind,
your soul --

KEEN
-- He feeds on my consciousness?

ROSE
Sure, fancy words, same difference.
He's not human! He's-he's... like, a
demon or some kinda unholy somethin'.

KEEN
That means the Immortals --

ROSE
-- Snacks. Now here's the weird part.

KEEN
-- How can this get any weirder?

ROSE
Time moves different in the house. No
time's passed.

KEEN
I'm... still at the feast.

THE STUDY

Suki plays. Tarquin cackles.

ROSE (V.O.)
That's right and when the music stops.

KEEN (V.O.)
-- I won't let him hurt you.

THE LIBRARY

ROSE
He's comin' for you. He wants you for
some stupid reason.

KEEN

He wants to know how I trick people.

ROSE

You trick people?

KEEN

That's common practice on the dark web. -- Almost table stakes.

ROSE

I dunno what any of those words mean. But I bet they ain't gonna help us fight some kinda immortal creature.

KEEN

All right then, we need to escape.

ROSE

I don't escape. Remember, I don't have a body. I'm like the Immortals, all mopin' around here.

KEEN

What happened to their bodies?

ROSE

The dragons ate 'em.

KEEN

What? No, that's wrong. Tarquin said they eat the cats.

ROSE

That monster!

The faint strains of the violin fall **SILENT**.

Tense, they turn as one to the door. Freeze.

THE STUDY

Tarquin spies the open double doors...

... Atticus and Hugo standing sentry outside the library.

But the musical rest only lasts for a dramatic breath.

-- Suki starts playing again.

Relief washes over Tarquin. He slumps back in his chair.

THE LIBRARY

Rose manhandles Keen to the podium shaft.

ROSE

I need ya to get outta here.

KEEN

I need to figure out what happened to you later, in your future.

ROSE

How would I know that?

KEEN

I need to find you in the real world.

ROSE

All I know is I'm not givin' up on ya again. Now get in the hole, Buster.

INT. VIOLET'S MODEST HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Real regret in real time. Violet sobs.

VIOLET

It still hurts.

Lilith takes Violet's hand.

VIOLET

She got sicker after the baby was born. -- Haunted, really. I visited every day. I-I tried to move her back home, but they said she was too sick for all that. Doctors.

Cries ugly.

Lilith stops recording. Pushes away her phone.

VIOLET

Would you like to meet her? I can take you to meet her.

Lilith lights up.

They stand.

VIOLET

I don't want your money. I wanna know what happened to my grandson.

INT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - LIBRARY - DAY

Her grandson starts down the ladder. Pauses.

KEEN
You're not coming?

ROSE
I can stall him.

KEEN
I can't lose you again.

ROSE
I'll catch up.

That rings like a lie.
Tears stream down her face.
Rose folds to her knees.
Fumbles for his hand.

ROSE
Now, ya gotta get outta here before I
start cryin'. -- Listen for my voice.

KEEN
-- Wait, just one question.

The faint violin **STOPS**. Applause.

ROSE
He's comin'!

KEEN
I just, I just need to know why --

ROSE
-- He's comin' now.

KEEN
You were the one who was supposed to
love me. Why wasn't I good enough?

His heart laid bare, her silence mercilessly stretches on.
Keen waits for an answer that may never come.

ROSE
I... I made a mistake.

Rose's eyes dart to the door.
Keen's attention moves there too.
The door turns **RED**.
She shoves his head down the shaft.

FROM THE SHAFT

Glassy-eyed, Rose slides the lectern back into place.

ROSE

I made a mistake.

Keen gazes up as the last sliver of light squeezes dark.

Above, heavy footfalls.

THE LIBRARY

Flanked by Atticus and Hugo, Tarquin cuts an imposing path.

His charming smile falters.

Behind the bird mask, cruel eyes judge the room...

... And fall upon Rose. She wilts.

FROM THE SHAFT

Quietly, Keen descends into the depths of...

THE CATACOMBS

... A torchlit labyrinth of earth, moss, and death. Shadows and flickering lights play on weeping limestone walls.

Around each corner, more skeletons in rotting rags crammed into niches. Carved into the very fabric of the passageway.

INT. VIOLET'S SEDAN - COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Violet drives while she roots through her purse. Even checks the road, occasionally. It's all quite precarious.

VIOLET

I have photos of her.

Passes Lilith a wallet photo album.

The cover embroidered with flowers.

Inside she finds faded photos protected in plastic sleeves.

LILITH

Oh, she was pretty.

VIOLET

-- My only baby girl.

LILITH

And what a pretty name.

VIOLET

It's a family name... Iris.

Lilith stares at a photo of Violet's daughter.

A striking young woman **WHO LOOKS NOTHING LIKE ROSE.**

INT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - SECRET PASSAGE - DAY

The orange glow of a gas lantern illuminates Odysseus and Tarquin's search down hidden tunnels.

THE CATACOMBS

Faint sounds tug at Keen's ear. Chains *rattle*. A woman *moans*.

They lead him to the crystal ball vision, **CLARA SHACKLED TO A STONE WALL**, swimming in and out of consciousness.

A squalid rat nibbles her toe.

Keen kicks it back into the shadows.

Tugs on impossibly thick chains.

KEEN

I remember you.

CLARA

Words. Words-words. Words.

KEEN

Hmm? I don't understand.

CLARA

Words-words. Words. Words. Words.

KEEN

This is because you talked to me.

ROSE (O.S.)

She was warned.

Keen spins.

But no one's there.

Lower. Lower. It's the **TABBY CAT.**

ROSE

(speaks through the cat)
Ya can't save her.

KEEN

C'mon, maybe, maybe there's, like, a key or something. We can't just leave her. -- Good people don't do that.

ROSE

There's good and then there's nuts. There ain't no keys for those chains. Ya willin' to stand up to Tarquin?

Torn, Keen watches...

... The cat sashays into a puddle of darkness and emerges under torchlight as **ROSE** cradling the tabby.

ROSE

Hurry up, slowpoke.

Resigned to her fate, Clara's head droops.

CLARA

Words.

MOMENTS LATER

Rose marshals Keen through a confounding maze of pathways.

KEEN

Wait. I think we're going in circles.

ROSE

Yeah, it is kind of easy to get turned around down here, but don't worry. He never comes down here.

KEEN

No, you said I was in danger if I stayed too long.

ROSE

Yeah, but he doesn't know where we are, dum dum. Here's the deal.

Rose and Keen stop.

ROSE

You and me, we're still part of the joining. We share his mind. And well, it's, it's kinda like a two-way street. Ya can sense when he's close.

KEEN

I don't sense anything.

ROSE

You'll start to feel it soon enough.
But he never comes down here.

KEEN

Then we're safe for now.

TOP OF THE PIT - ENTRANCE TO THE CATACOMBS

A heavy deadbolt locks across a stout wooden door. *Pop!*

Hugo signals to his companion.

Atticus unshackles both Komodo dragons.

Reptilian tongues flicker. Drool puddles.

The dragons prowl away.

ATTICUS

They have the scent.

HUGO

Now we just follow screams.

Screams of exaltation!

THE STUDY

Feverishly, the guests dance and *whoop*.

THREE GYPSIES bang out raucous *Balkan folk music*.

In the bird mask, Tarquin whirls like a dervish.

-- Collides with Suki.

Swallows her in a bear hug...

... They fall to the floor in hysterical laughter.

Guests swarm. Encircle them. Applaud his enthusiasm.

Gasping for breath, Tarquin holds his heart, fit to burst.

WELL OF THE DAMNED

Keen and Rose stop at...

... The edge of a tectonic fissure in the pathway.

The only means across, a rickety wooden FOOTBRIDGE.

ROSE

The other side, there's a passage that
takes us back to the house.

From below, *wailing* rises out of the rift.

Hoisting a burning torch, Keen gazes over the side.

ROSE

The Well of the Damned. The Immortals aren't immortal. It takes a zillion years, but, eventually, all that's left is their voice.

KEEN

How far down you think it goes?

ROSE

Straight to hell?

Drops her torch into the yawning maw. It vanishes.

They shy away from the precarious bridge to form a plan.

ROSE

One at a time? I don't think that bridge'll hold both of us.

-- Wheels to the sound of *hissing*.

A Komodo dragon crawls out of the shadows. Flicks its tongue.

Keen steels himself.

Rose hangs a brave face, but she's terrified.

The second Komodo dragon blocks the only other pathway besides the bridge.

Stomping closer, they force Keen and Rose backward.

Rose pulls the cat closer in her arms.

Considers the derelict bridge.

ROSE

-- You go first. Keen?

Keen talks to his phone.

KEEN

What'd you mean, no vulnerabilities or natural predators?

Slowly, Keen and Rose retreat.

Slowly, the dragons advance.

ROSE
I can hold 'em off.

KEEN
Yeah? With what?

ROSE
It don't matter. I'm not real.

KEEN
Well, you're real to me, and I'm not
going to watch one of those-those
things eat my mother alive.

Sweeps his torch at them like a credible threat.

The monsters **SNAP**.

ROSE
Chance the bridge together?

KEEN
On three?

She nods.

KEEN
One...

A dragon drools.

KEEN
Two...

The cat burrows deeper in Rose's arms.

KEEN
Three!

Neither one moves.

ROSE
Ya didn't run --

KEEN
-- You were supposed to run.

Steps between Rose and danger.

A dragon *hisses* at him.

The cat springs from Rose's arms.

Hisses right back at 'em. Flashes claws.

Both the giant reptiles focus on the feline.

-- Who bolts for the bridge.

Hell-bent for the cat, the dragons nearly bowl over Keen and Rose and scurry onto the...

COLLAPSING BRIDGE

... The dragons flail as they plummet.

From the depths, the *wailing* crescendos.

On the far side of the rift, the cat pops up.

Meows.

Keen ridicules his phone:

KEEN

Their natural predators are cats.

The feline arches its back.

Shoots away as --

-- A prehistoric claw slaps over the lip of the trench.

Keen spins. Yikes!

One of the Komodo dragons clambers over the ledge. Pissed.

KEEN

Run!

Down a pathway, Rose heads left, Keen veers right.

Keen rounds a corner. Slides to a stop. Dust settles.

Where'd she go?

KEEN

(loud whisper)

Rose. Rose!

ROSE (O.S.)

-- This way.

Out of a wall niche, a skeleton stabs a bony finger.

Unnerved, Keen nearly pees himself.

The skeleton's mandible moves to Rose's voice...

ROSE (O.S.)

This way, dear.

KEEN
 (to the skeleton)
 Very funny.

Whips around and into --

ROSE

-- Scaring Keen half to death.

THE WELL OF THE DAMNED

Atticus and Hugo stare over the side of the trench.

Wearing the bird mask, Tarquin joins them.

TARQUIN
 (gleeful)
 Thus endeth the trials. Now, go find
 me my prize.

THE OSSUARIES

Obsessively checking over their shoulders, Keen and Rose make their way down walls cobbled from human skulls and bones.

KEEN
 Before we get separated again, I need
 to know your birthday.

ROSE
 Hmm, January nineteenth, why?

KEEN
 Identifying information, so I can find
 you online. Figure out, you know, what
 happens to you... in the real world.

Rose stops him.

ROSE
 No. I wanna know about you.

KEEN
 (chuckles)
 Well, I, uh... I had this whole big
 speech I worked on but, I don't know.

ROSE
 -- Would I be proud of you?

KEEN
 (considers)
 I'm... I'm not so sure sometimes.

She smiles, accepting him for who he really is.
 And that's just enough to fill the hole in his heart.
 Relieved, Keen brightens just a little.
 -- Rose whips her head left, then right.

ROSE
 (rushes ahead)
 Keep up, I can feel him.

KEEN
 I thought you said he doesn't come
 down here?

ROSE
 Don't ya feel him? Keen? Keen!

His name echoes. Unanswered.

She's lost him again.

Something's caught Keen's eye...

A STATUE OF TARQUIN CARVED INTO A STONE WALL

... Guarding THE ENTRANCE to the other side of the house.

Rose circles back for him.

KEEN
 (meaning the statue)
 Guess I'm not the only one with an ego
 around here.

ROSE
 That's the entrance to the other side
 of the house. Never go to the other
 side of the house. It's forbidden.

Keen leans closer to inspect a necklace carved around the
 statue's neck. Pulls out his necklace for reference.

KEEN
 It's just like your necklace.

ROSE
 -- Mine?

KEEN
 The one you gave me.

ROSE
 I haven't seen that before in my life.

-- The eyes of the statue **SNAP** open.

As Keen steps away, the statue swipes at him.

KEEN

That doesn't make any sense.

They're both oblivious that the statue's alive.

KEEN

Yeah, but, actually, it gives me an idea. I think I know someone who might be able to get us some answers.

Grabs Rose's wrist.

Marches her to The Entrance.

ROSE

-- No, wait!

-- The statue **SPRINGS TO LIFE**.

Horrified, Keen ducks. Stumbles.

The statue swallows Rose in a bear hug.

Keen tumbles backward into an onyx void inside The Entrance.

The door slams shut. *Thump*. Rose cries out.

Doubled over, Rose flails at nothing.

The statue of Tarquin is back in place. Solid stone.

She calms.

-- From behind, Tarquin snatches a fist of her red locks.

ROSE

I kept him down here as long as I could! It must be time by now.

Tarquin viciously jerks her head from side to side until she transforms back into...

ODYSSEUS THE THESPIAN

... The world tilts.

TARQUIN

Where is he?

In unison, their faces drift to The Entrance door.

EXT. RAVENSGLEN SANATORIUM - DAY

A conspiracy of ravens cawing sounds like *gone, gone*.

In a simple graveyard off the main grounds, Lilith and Violet reflect on an unassuming headstone. Both swallow tears.

Chiseled in stone over the hospital entrance: "RAVENSGLEN SANATORIUM, est. October 7, 1849."

INT. RAVENSGLEN SANATORIUM - LATER

The HEAD NURSE (60s) accompanies Lilith and Violet down a spacious hallway burnished with stately **PORTRAITS OF MEN**.

Violet stops. Wounded, she steps closer to one of them.

LILITH

Was he the one you dealt with?

She nods. Doesn't care much for the person in the photo.

HEAD NURSE

-- He was only here briefly.

Lilith knows there's more. Waits patiently.

Heartbreak grips Violet.

HEAD NURSE

There were whispers, accusations of inappropriate relations with female patients, but we don't discuss such things. It was a very different time.

The Head Nurse can't meet Violet's soft, withering gaze.

HEAD NURSE

We don't discuss them officially.

A flicker of hope shared between Lilith and Violet.

The Head Nurse starts a long and very sad story while they continue down the hall. Her voice dies away as we land on a portrait of a man with a shit-eating grin we'd know anywhere.

Lilith sprints back to the portrait. Double checks the engraved placard below it: "**Chairman, Tarquin Demeaux.**"

A rivièrè necklace peeks out from under his suit jacket.

Lilith opens her purse. Rummages for her phone. Missing.

INT. VIOLET'S MODEST HOME - KITCHEN - QUICK FLASHBACK

Lilith stops recording. Pushes away her phone.

INT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - OTHER SIDE OF THE HOUSE - LIMBO

Endless white nothingness.

From a fetal position, Keen jolts awake. Gasps. Stands. Squints into the blinding emptiness.

ANNABELLE (O.S.)
*With a knick-knack / paddy whack /
 Give a dog a bone.*

KEEN
 Annabelle? Annabelle, where are you?

In a frilly frock, Annabelle (5) winks into existence.

Her easy smile twists into a frown...

ANNABELLE
 Yer not supposed to be here.

... And then it bounces back.

ANNABELLE
 But I won't tell.

KEEN
 How do I get out of here, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE
 You never get out. It's a game, and he always wins. He knows what everybody wants.

KEEN
 That's right, it's a game, a puzzle.

A puzzle he can't solve.

KEEN
 Okay, what's he want, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE
 You can't tell him I told you.

KEEN
 I promise. Cross my heart.

Annabelle (now 30) holds his gaze.

KEEN

-- You. He wants you.

ANNABELLE

I could never love.

KEEN

Ugh, you can figure this out. She rejected him... She abandoned him...

Frustrated, Keen checks his phone. No bars.

KEEN

Wait, how'd you escape last time?

Annabelle checks to see if the coast is clear.

Sings like a little girl.

ANNABELLE

This old man / he played four / He played knick-knack on my door.

Raps twice on an imaginary door. Steps back.

A door inches open to the **PERISTYLUM**.

KEEN

I can take you with me. I can figure this out. Do you trust me?

ANNABELLE

We're never getting outta here.

KEEN

But I can save you, Annabelle.

A sadness overwhelms her.

Alone, Keen steps through the door.

Annabelle waves goodbye.

Keen waves back.

INT. ESCALADE - MOVING INCREDIBLY FAST - DAY

Aggressively, Mack drives.

In the backseat with Simon, Lilith growls at her phone.

LILITH

He's not picking up.

SIMON

Are there trackers on all our phones?

From the passenger seat:

TINKER

Legally or effectively?

EXT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - PERISTYLUM - DAY

A courtyard ringed with doors to the house.

The instant Keen steps through Annabelle's door, a dozen Immortals, all muttering at once, surround Keen.

A frail coward in opera gloves, EDITH (80s) arrives first.

EDITH

Kill me, please. End this nightmare.

SEBASTIAN

Oh, you have to stay.

A portly dandy in a fez, YULE (30s) proffers pink champagne.

YULE

His wine cellar is unparalleled.

A vain man in a chic tracksuit, CASSIUS (20s) claps his back.

CASSIUS

You never get old.

Odysseus emerges from a door leading into the house.

The door behind him turns **RED**.

Keen pushes through the mob to another door.

That door turns **RED**.

A clingy, buxom wench, MATILDA (60s) bites his ear.

MATILDA

Ye can sod me forever, boyo.

Keen sheds the woman.

Searches for a means of escape.

In succession, every door turns **RED**, but one.

Keen slips inside...

THE GREAT HALL AT NIGHT

... In the middle of the earlier feast. No time has passed.

EXT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - PORTICO - DAY

Atticus and Hugo block the front door.

HUGO

And you are who?

Armed like they're invading a small country Mack, Tinker, Simon, and a DOZEN HARDY SOULS stand ready behind Lilith.

LILITH

We're the people coming in.

Lilith's smile isn't really a smile.

Atticus turns. Speaks to no one.

ATTICUS

Annabelle, no.

A child's hand slips inside Lilith's hand.

-- Lilith disappears.

No one can believe their eyes.

Startled, Lilith sees Annabelle. Feels her grip. Jerks away.

GLOWING YELLOW, Annabelle's eyes dim.

ANNABELLE

I'll take you to him.

LILITH

W-what's happening?

Annabelle cups Lilith's hand again. Leads her away.

Atticus sidesteps into their path.

Slightly bumps the little girl's shoulder.

ANNABELLE

Should I tell him you touched me?

Instantly, Atticus and Hugo back away.

INT. TARQUIN'S MANSION - GREAT HALL - NIGHT

The Party-goers are unaware of Keen's presence.

Keen stares at his corporeal body still slumped in the chair.

Quintus snaps a selfie with Tarquin, still in a trance.

-- Every door instantly slams shut and turns **RED**.

Keen's eyes flit like a cornered animal. Tarquin has him!

KEEN

Now I can feel you, you bastard.

A raven mocks him from the rafters.

Keen thinks hard. Thinks fast.

Fumbles for his phone.

It's open to a spreadsheet filled with women's names.

The name "**ROSE**" glimmers in two consecutive entries.

Gobsmacked, he **SOLVES THE PUZZLE**.

Repeatedly blinks at a...

RED DOOR

... Leering back at him.

KEEN

We're the same. I got it. We're the same.

Makes a business decision.

Marches across the chamber.

The tabby cat steps in front of him. Parks.

KEEN

Mommy?

The cat *meows*.

KEEN

I... I don't know if you can hear me. I don't know if that's even a thing, but if she can't, tell Rose, tell her I'm glad I finally got to meet her. And I think I know how I can make her proud of me. I can stop him. I might be the only one who can.

Lifts the cat to safety on a table.

Pulls a ragged gallows breath.

Whips open the **RED** door to reveal --

-- **TARQUIN**, wearing the bird mask. Standing on the doorsill, the gateway to Keen's mind. A swirling vortex behind him.

KEEN

-- It's a game.

TARQUIN

(bellows)

Oh, forgive me, brother Charon! For I have denied you yet another soul to ferry across the river this night!

KEEN

-- It's a puzzle, right?

TARQUIN

Forgive me, Apsu, and the gods of old!

KEEN

-- I'm kind of good with puzzles. My stock-in-trade actually.

This really takes the wind out of Tarquin's sails.

-- Lilith and Annabelle (30) step into the Great Hall.

LILITH

I found Iris, your mother.

KEEN

No, you mean Rose.

LILITH

Trust me, her name was Iris.

KEEN

-- You guys shouldn't be here.

LILITH

Did Rose tell you he's your father?

Confused doesn't even begin to cover it for Keen.

TARQUIN

(euphoric)

Son!

LILITH

Did she tell you he gave your folks the necklace? To hush up the fact he raped your mother while she was a patient in his hospital?

All the shades of angry rush to Keen's face.

TARQUIN
Lies. All lies, Annabelle, don't
believe a word of it.

ANNABELLE
Let me go.

TARQUIN
No, my beloved --

ANNABELLE
-- I'll never love you.

TARQUIN
But... but you'll learn to.

Desperate, Annabelle turns to Keen.

KEEN
(to Tarquin)
-- We're the same. Like, like names
repeating on a spreadsheet.

TARQUIN
Oh, you truly are a dull man...

KEEN
-- We both trick people by exploiting
their personal demons.

TARQUIN
... But your hubris is your undoing.
You see riddles in vapors. Seek
answers where only questions lay. No
riddle, no puzzle, you arrogant oaf.
My only ambition was to delay you.

KEEN
-- And both abandoned by a woman.

Tarquin's face says that's a line you never cross.

KEEN
We're the same.

FLASHBACKS FROM EARLIER

TARQUIN
Go through a red door and you'll be
lost forever, instantly. Even I can't
save you from that fate.

ROSE

... We share his mind. And well, it's,
it's kinda like a two-way street...

BACK TO SCENE

A pinprick of **YELLOW** warms in Tarquin's eyes --

-- The **BIRD MASK VANISHES**, leaving his face bare.

KEEN

We're linked. -- Connected through the
joining. Our minds, they're the same.

Adjusts the bird mask now on **HIS FACE**.

Keen steps closer, blocking Tarquin's only escape.

KEEN

And now I control the mask.

TARQUIN

-- Wait-wait-wait, a moment, before
you make the gravest of errors.

Tarquin grimaces at the roiling abyss over his shoulder.

Braces himself in the doorway.

TARQUIN

'Twas fully my mistake, swallowing
mortal beings. I put my nose in the
wrong text, prayed to the wrong deity.

Transforms into Keen.

TARQUIN

But you, you have a choice. Trap me in
your mind, and it... it will forever
change you... in ways your mortal
imagination could not even fathom.

KEEN

I know who I am now, Lilith, and you
were right. You don't need me. But
this world does. Run, Lilith. Run!

BARRELS square into Tarquin's chest --

-- Knocking both of them through the entrance to Keen's mind.

The **RED** door slams shut. *Thump!*

An ominous silence --

-- Shattered by the Duchess *screaming*.

Keen **STARTS AWAKE** in his chair. Tumbles to the floor.

Rips away the bird mask.

Party-goers gape in horror, phones still recording as...

... Tarquin sprawls limp. Lifeless.

His eyes frozen open. Filled with blinding horror.

All the doors fade from red to a dark ochre.

The party's over. Everyone peels away their mask.

Lilith and Quintus survey the room.

Something important **SNAPS** inside of Lilith when she spots...

TARQUIN

... **TRAPPED INSIDE THE WALL MIRROR** and pissed to all hell.

Hurling insults, Tarquin batters the glass. Warps it.

Embracing oblivion, Annabelle waves as she dissolves away.

Aghast, everyone shuffles a step or two toward the mirror.

QUINTUS

(to Keen)

How'd you trap him in your mind?

Triumphantly, Keen climbs to his feet.

Chuckles with wicked satisfaction, then relaxes.

Lilith bounces off everything and everyone. Scrambles out as Odysseus scrambles in. Atticus and Hugo in his wake.

They crowd their master's slain body, devastated.

Odysseus looks up. Levels a bony finger Keen's way.

ODYSSEUS

(garbled without a tongue)

He is the one. He is the one!

Every last face in the Great Hall hardens.

Slowly, moves toward Keen, surrounding him.

KEEN

(backpedals)

No. No, you don't understand.

Scans the room for a friend.
 Only cold, dead eyes shine back at him.
 No weapon in reach, Keen balls a fist. Readies to fight.
 The throng presses closer.
 Odysseus edges in front.
 Practically stares straight through him --
 -- And collapses to the chamber floor.
 Prostrates himself before Keen.
 Swiftly, Atticus and Hugo follow suit.
 All kneel before the **NEW MASTER OF THE HOUSE**.
 Keen cycles through confusion, amazement, and pride. Accepts
 he's forever changed in ways he could not even fathom.

KEEN

I do hope everyone has enjoyed this
 evening's entertainment!

The Great Hall erupts into **THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE**.
 Gracefully, Keen bows.
 Inside the mirror, Tarquin's eyes flit like a caged animal.

KEEN

Now then...

As Keen's pupils **GLOW A MALEVOLENT YELLOW**, the **CAT MASK**, **GOLD CROWN**, and **RUBY NECKLACE** frame his face.

The rapturous adulation rises.
 Smiling peacefully, IMMORTALS take form behind Keen and then
 dissolve away into the evening air.

KEEN

... I'm simply ravenous.

Licks his lips. It's a whole thing.

Cravenly, Tarquin eases away from the glass.
 The *applause* distorts into the sound of a loose gurney wheel
rattling across the stone pathway outside the manor.

EXT. TARQUIN'S MANOR - PORTICO - NIGHT

A POLICE OFFICER (30) monitors PARAMEDICS (20s) wheeling away Tarquin, mummified in a straightjacket. Strapped in tight.

Tarquin's eyes frozen open. Filled with blinding horror.

TARQUIN

No. Not like this. No, please! No.

The gurney's loaded into the back of a **SQUARE AMBULANCE**.

The **RED** door slams shut. *Thump*.

TARQUIN'S TRAPPED IN A BOX.

The siren *squawks* as the ambulance speeds away.

ANNABELLE (V.O.)

*This old man / he played ten / He
played knick-knack once again / With a
knick-knack paddywhack / Give the dog
a bone / This old man came rolling
home.*

FADE TO BLACK.