

Ashes to Ashes

Episode 1
"Dust to Dust"

by
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EXT. MANSION LANDING - DAY

The suited pillar of SILAS AMBROSIER, a 78 year-old valet, stands under a brief awning before the front doors of a fabulous mansion. An umbrella shakes in his hand as he waits for the arrival of a distant estate car.

He squints to see it, a silver spot coming through iron gates at the end of a wet gravel driveway and roundabout.

The gloved hand of BYRON LEEDS, 75, pats Silas's shoulder. Silas gives a fractional, startled jolt, but his face remains transfixed on the approaching vehicle.

BYRON
Silas, it's cold.

SILAS
Yes. You should make our guests
some tea.

Byron pushes, to clarify.

BYRON
Perhaps I should make some for the
servants as well.

SILAS
Just be sure to drink it
downstairs.

BYRON
Want anything in yours?

Silas looks at him and blinks. Then, a small smile.

SILAS
Oh. Yes.
(mocking)
Scotch.

Byron snorts.

BYRON
Only if there's any left after
Mister Fitzpatrick is finished.

SILAS
We live a tragedy, Byron, where
Americans drink highland whisky.

Byron eyes the oncoming car - almost here.

BYRON

I guess I shouldn't have bought all
that kirsch, then, for the Swiss.

They snicker together.

BYRON (CONT'D)

I'll fetch Colin to show them in.

Byron returns to the house through a pair of heavy double
doors.

The estate car pulls in, gravel spraying off the recently
raked driveway. Silas holds his umbrella up for the driver,
PERRY WYSS, as he disembarks from the car.

Perry, a Swiss man in his 30s, is haunted-looking on the best
of days, and this is definitely not one of those.

SILAS

Good day, sir.

Silas hands the umbrella to him in exchange for his car keys.

PERRY

That seems like an odd thing to say
before a funeral.

SILAS

Sir?

(to indulge him)

One must be composed, even in
grief.

PERRY

I thought the whole point was to
cry and such.

Since relinquishing his cover, the rain has wet Silas's hair
and face so that it would be impossible to tell even if he
were.

COLIN MORRIS, 20, a quiet but intense servant with icy blue
eyes, emerges from the mansion and stands at attention by the
door.

Silas gestures in his direction.

SILAS

There will be time enough for that
later. If you would just follow
Mr. Morris to your room?

PERRY
To my what?

SILAS
Your *room*, sir.

PERRY
Oh, of course. I thought you
said... I have the most morbid
mind.

A window of the estate car rolls down and the face of
ADELAIDE WYSS, 29, is revealed, as white as the sky.

ADELAIDE
Why are we delayed, Perry?

PERRY
(to Silas, confidentially)
My wife is not feeling well.

SILAS
Only my importunity, Madam!

Adelaide sits back, impatient.

PERRY
Close the window, honey. It's
cold.

It remains open.

SILAS
(to Perry)
The invitation was for you alone.

PERRY
I wasn't about to leave my sick
wife and our children to
themselves.

Silas raises an eyebrow.

SILAS
Children?
(resigned)
I will notify the cook.

PERRY
Please. And ask him to prepare
some tea for my wife as well. She
could use something stiffening in
it - scotch will do.

Silas raises his eyebrows, amused.

SILAS
Our cook will take care of the
details. And Mr. Morris will take
care of you and your bags.

He gestures firmly at the doors.

PERRY
We have more in the car. Very
delicate... do you understand?

Silas nods patiently, his hand still extended.

SILAS
(irritably)
We will of course treat *your bags*
with the utmost respect.

Perry makes a sign and the rest of the Wyss family - Adelaide cradling her baby daughter DOROTHY and a suitcase, and the five year-old PERRY JR - emerge from the estate.

They hand the bag to Colin and follow him inside, all drowsy and wilted from their trip.

Sourly, Silas climbs into the car. It starts, and he chauffeurs it away.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

The estate car, driven by Silas, carries along the gravel boulevard past RUBIN, a middle-aged African man in a cardigan, and SEAN, a body-builder type with brown leather gloves. The motley pair stroll back towards the mansion with limp umbrellas.

SEAN
(emotive)
We were neck and neck. He looked
over at me, and he must have seen
the strangest expression, because
just then I heard it. It went...

He snaps his fingers.

RUBIN
(concerned)
A bone?

SEAN

No no, bones *crack*. This was much worse. The tendon right along here...

He pushes at his knee and winces a little.

SEAN (CONT'D)

I heard it snap like a rubber band, then I went down.

RUBIN

So he won the race?

SEAN

He did not!

Rubin laughs uproariously.

SEAN (CONT'D)

It turns out three legs are better than two, in the end.

He holds up his hands and grins.

RUBIN

There must have been a great deal of pain.

SEAN

There still is. All the time. I'll probably have to live with the legacy of that race for the rest of my life.

RUBIN

(wry)

Being part of a race can change a man's life, make him angry.

SEAN

Exactly. The competitive mindset gets a man so serious. You can't appreciate what really matters.

RUBIN

Your kin.

SEAN

Exactly! Friends, family, the people you love.

INT. GREAT HALL - DAY

The Wyss family shuffle through an enormous, decadent hall littered with couches, overstuffed chairs, ornate rugs, and other furniture that, clustered by an extraordinarily large fireplace, looks like the plunder from a doll house.

Colin leads them past JACK, 33 and drunk, who eyes the family truculently from a minibar embedded in one of the wood-panelled walls.

Adelaide averts her eyes from his leer and pulls Perry Jr close as they pass out of the room.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Colin is leading Adelaide and her children onto a flight of ornate circular stairs when, from the other room, Jack barks:

JACK (O.S.)
People like that make me sick!

Adelaide shoots Perry a withering look. She is not impressed.

INT. GREAT HALL - DAY

Jack guffaws to himself. Walking towards him from the door to the foyer are Sean and Rubin, Sean teasing off his gloves.

RUBIN
I think, sir, that it's possible there is a better explanation for your condition.

Jack rolls his bloodshot eyes.

JACK
Yeah? Well, I'm warning both of you. I'm warning the *world*: I've only just started with this.

SEAN
I am genuinely frightened for you.

RUBIN
You know, the funeral is in just a couple of hours.

JACK
Yeah, I'm drowning my sorrows.

SEAN
(sarcastic)
Uh huh.

Jack's face bunches up.

JACK
I'm warning you...

SEAN
I said I'm frightened.

Rubin intervenes.

RUBIN
We seem to have started on the wrong foot. My name is Rubin and this is my new friend Sean. And you are?

JACK
I'm a stingy bastard.

RUBIN
Yes... well. Sean and I are on our way upstairs to prepare for the service. Perhaps you would like to come along?

JACK
I *am* preparing for the service.

Rubin frowns at Sean. Sean shrugs, then they leave Jack sitting there. He spits after them onto the rug.

Once they've disappeared into the stairwell, he notices how expensive the rug is and rubs at the soiled spot self-consciously with his foot.

INT. THE WYSS'S ROOM - DAY

Several wedges of sunlight from the slatted windows make this large room quite bright and airy. Although the windows are closed, a mysterious draft lifts and tosses the paper-thin curtains against the room's other artifacts, all homely, all large: an arcanelly clothed bed, a medieval chest with iron lock, a writer's desk, a vanity dresser, and several sturdy but slightly splintered chairs of yew.

The door also groans -- a practice it indulges in as Perry steps through, followed by the rest of his family like ducklings.

ADELAIDE
This is pathetic.

PERRY
What do mean? This is lovely.
(to Perry Jr)
Isn't this lovely?

He emphasizes the question by fondly patting the bed, which creaks. Without waiting for a response from his son (who nods, unseen by Perry), he looks his wife in the eye and states outright:

PERRY (CONT'D)
You're going to be okay.

ADELAIDE
I don't feel okay.

Perry, already impatient, begins to unpack. He heaves a suitcase onto the creaky bed and pops the lid.

PERRY
You get carsick all the time.

ADELAIDE
This place. It's drafty.

There is a knock at the door. Perry, after a sidelong glance at his wife, answers it.

Colin, the young male servant with icy blue eyes, stands to attention in the doorway. He's holding a tray with steaming teapot, filled china, and waiting pitchers of milk, honey, sugar.

COLIN
Your tea, sir.
(discreet)
With a little something in it for
the missus.

He nods at one of the cups.

Perry is pleased, and accepts the tray.

PERRY
Ah. Thank you, Mr...?

COLIN
You're welcome, sir. Enjoy the
fune... um...

The boy frowns and stops himself. Then he turns and walks off. Perry blinks.

He closes the door then gets back to pulling stuff out of the suitcase. Clothes, papers, shoes, etc.

PERRY

I swear. The first time in your life you're catered to like a queen and you complain.

He lifts the cup Colin had indicated and offers it to Adelaide, then takes one for himself and for Perry Jr, who also claims the sugar.

PERRY (CONT'D)

There. I had the servants put a tonic in that one to calm your nerves.

Adelaide begins to melt.

ADELAIDE

Oh, Perry. I'm sorry for being such a drain.

Perry removes a folded letter from the suitcase and tosses it on the writing desk.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

I know how much this means to you.

She embraces him while he's lifting some clothes out of the suitcase.

He drops the clothes and returns the hug. Adelaide stares down at:

The folded letter on the writing desk, which is partially obscured by its enclosing envelope; however, a fragment is visible. It reads, "*-you, his long-lost child, should inherit his estate and assets. Should you-*"

This funeral means a lot to him, indeed...

INT. TIFFANY'S ROOM - DAY

TIFFANY CHENG, 40, dressed in a black strapless dress with a string of pearls, presses one ear against the wall of her room and listens to the muffled sound of Perry and Adelaide's conversation.

The rest of her goes about painting her nails.

INT. RUBIN'S ROOM - DAY

This room is much smaller than that provided for the Wyss family, but very similarly decorated. The biggest difference is that Rubin is standing in it, pushing tie under waistcoat in imitation of the other major difference: a standing portrait of a middle-aged Mr. Anger, dressed in a black suit, on the wall.

Rubin hums something baroque to himself as he dresses.

INT. SEAN'S ROOM - DAY

A trophy - lying carelessly on his vanity among a pile of male cosmetics: comb, aftershave, toothbrush, etc, all multiplied by two in the vanity's mirror. Above, also reflected: Sean's face, bunched up before a sneeze.

HUACHOO!

He snuffles, tries to rub the spots on the mirror with one shaking hand (abandoning this, his sleeve).

Then he leans over and sips from a cup of tea without picking it up.

INT. TIFFANY'S ROOM - DAY

Tiffany still has her ear to the wall. She can hear Perry and Adelaide's voice, raised, from the other side.

She's startled from her perch when someone knocks politely at the door.

INT. UPPER PASSAGEWAY - DAY

Colin approaches and then knocks at one of the doors on this yellow-lit wooden passageway.

COLIN

The procession is in fifteen minutes.

A woman's voice, that of CLAIRE GAUTHIER, 30, rings out musically from behind.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Be right there!

Colin moves to the next door and knocks.

COLIN
The procession is-

JACK (O.S.)
Don't come in!
(mutters)
Queer.

Colin checks the hallway, then removes an envelope emblazoned with a tree that has eyes instead of apples from his pocket.

He slips it under the door.

A brief silence.

JACK (CONT'D)
(as if nothing happened)
Do you have a girl servant? *She*
can come in!

Colin checks the hallway again. He jumps slightly to see MONA LARSON, an old woman (75, perhaps) in servant's livery with a PARAKEET perched on her shoulder.

COLIN
You startled me.

She doesn't respond. The parakeet cocks its head.

He studies them, a little fearfully, then turns and walks the other way.

EXT. FACADE - DAY

The crooked angles of the Anger mansion cut into a grey sky. Ravens collect on the eaves, polypous, or like teeth on a beached sea creature.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

A cherubic stone fountain, broken now, leaks water from its eyes, nose, and the original spout, its mouth. From the lake at its feet climbs a net of moss that seeks to drag the petrified creature underwater.

EXT. GARDEN PATH - DAY

Two mangy crows fight over a scrap of something in the road.

EXT. ESTATE GRAVEYARD - DAY

The graveyard is overgrown. Tombstones of the Anger family dot the field, some wrapped in ivy, others are pitted, calcified, or missing chunks of stone, reminding the world of stone's own mortality.

Behind these rise a variety of decorative angels, not of stone, but pruned hedges. They have been neglected of late, and now grow into contorted and hideous approximations of the human shape.

EXT. FUNERAL GROUNDS - DAY

Over his shoulder, Colin, dressed blackly, watches the two fighting crows (distant now) with fascination.

JANICE, an 18 year-old African American, watches him in turn with curiosity from the corner of one eye.

Besides her, ten other MOURNERS in black and with black umbrellas observe the funeral of Mr. Anger. Silas presides from a raised mound of excavated earth near the head. They cluster around the closed casket, murmuring in pairs while Silas prepares his speech from a crisp piece of paper.

At last, he coughs politely and silence descends.

SILAS

(addressing the crowd)

Even at eighty-four years, Milton Anger was a great man with great ambitions.

The ceremony is interrupted briefly as Adelaide begins a fit of noisy, throat-scraping coughs. She recovers quickly (but continues to cough and sniffle a little throughout the speech). Perry glares at her, anxious but also annoyed.

SILAS (CONT'D)

(over action)

He was troubled; he was a perfectionist; and he was often misunderstood, but those of us who knew him as a friend recognized in these things his genius. He was so vital, even in his last days, that I am still amazed to be here instead of him... brotherless.

Jack begins to cry audibly (still drunk). Claire, standing next to him, wraps a conciliatory arm around his shoulders.

SILAS (CONT'D)

(over action)

He used to say to me, "I am never going to die. You will see to it, Mr. Ambrosier." Now I realize that, as his valet, making sure of that has always been my basic responsibility, and it still is. I will always remember him and be loyal to him until my own time comes.

Tiffany watches Perry and Adelaide, now circumnavigating the extraction of a tissue from her handbag, with disapproval.

Perry notices, and tries to ignore her with a guilty duck of his head.

SILAS (CONT'D)

(over action)

I'm telling you about this great man because when that happens, and I am afraid it will not be long, his memory will need to be carried a little further. And a little further, legendlike, until we see the utopia for man that he envisioned and, as a philosopher, dedicated his life to.

Sean is hypnotized by Mona who, standing by the edge of the podium, feeds a rice cracker to her parakeet.

SILAS (CONT'D)

(over action)

Mr Anger was a man of science. He was not religious. But I am, and he would respect this prayer I have prepared for those of you who never knew him - because he cared about your legacy very much and thought about you often from his home at this isolated property.

Rubin bows his head as Silas begins recital. He occasionally murmurs along (or is it just his shivering)?

SILAS (CONT'D)

(over action)

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no way cast out.

Byron notices Perry Jr watching him. The kid seems quite fascinated by the old man. (He is quite scary looking after all.) Byron gives the boy a grin lacking in teeth and sticks his tongue out.

Perry Jr hides his face behind his mother's dress. Then he peeks out.

SILAS (CONT'D)

*Thou shalt show me the path of
life; in thy presence is the
fullness of joy, and at thy right
hand there is pleasure for
evermore.*

Suddenly, Colin, still gazing out at the grounds, turns his attention sharply towards Janice. She meets his eyes for a second, then looks away.

He walks up to and past her to the casket. Mona watches him suspiciously. So does her parakeet, identically.

SILAS (CONT'D)

*In sure and certain hope of the
resurrection to eternal life, we
commend to Almighty God our
brother, and we commit his body to
the ground;*

Colin removes a red rose bud from his breast pocket, places it on top of the casket.

SILAS (CONT'D)

*earth to earth, ashes to ashes,
dust to dust.*

Colin picks up a handful of dirt and tosses it after the rose. It's crushed.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

A billow of steam occludes the business in this gourmet kitchen. What can be seen: a stack of ovens, a broad gas range, a rotisserie pit, an industrial refrigerator, and many fine examples of cookery (these litter the countertops). What can be heard: bubbling broths, the scuffling of feet, and the irritable boom of Byron's voice as, somewhere among the mists, he issues orders.

BYRON (O.S.)

Don't you dare let that boil over!

...

(MORE)

BYRON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Will you be careful with that,
please? ... Faster! ... Too
soft, do it again.

Meanwhile, Silas enters through a set of double doors and stands by with an amused expression.

The steam clears, revealing a red-faced Byron, alone, shaking his finger and talking to a frying pan.

BYRON (CONT'D)
I'll be damned if you don't hurry
up.

Silas coughs to announce himself.

SILAS
Wishing for the old days when you
had a fleet of maids, I suppose.

Byron whirls around, then laughs a boisterous laugh.

BYRON
A redhead, a blonde, and a blackie
each.

SILAS
(smirking)
You did get around.

Byron shakes his head.

BYRON
Look how far we've fallen, eh?

SILAS
(shrugging)
There's always Mona.

Byron's laugh again.

BYRON
Oh, yes, there's always Mona.
Always has been.

SILAS
Who's the has-been?

Chuckles, then they embrace like old friends.

SILAS (CONT'D)
It's almost nice to have guests in
the house again. It livens things
up, don't you think?

BYRON

I don't know; some of them set my teeth on edge.

Byron makes a semi-toothy face to demonstrate.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Which reminds me... I had better add some scotch to the duck glaze.

Byron stirs at a pot.

SILAS

I am eager to see how they take the *news*.

Byron turns to him with a twinkle in his eye.

BYRON

I'll pop some corn kernels just for the two of us.

INT. THE WYSS'S ROOM - EVENING

It's a mess. Clothes have been pulled out of luggage and laid on the bed for consideration, and already Perry Jr has begun to use the place as a personal playground. The lighter furniture has been arranged to make something like a fort under a bedsheet, and a toy train lies toppled near its base. A handful of unopened boxes have been stacked in the corner; these are marked, "Fragile! For God's sake handle with care!"

Wan but proud, Adelaide stands in front of the vanity and belts on a string of pearls very similar to those Tiffany was wearing earlier.

She has to stop momentarily to rub her forehead. Then she blinks at herself in the mirror, woozy.

Perry catches a glimpse of this as he enters holding Perry Jr's hand like they're crossing the street.

PERRY JR

Can we go exploring again later?

PERRY

Maybe, if there's time.

PERRY JR

Please? I want to see the room with the monsters. Mummy could take me!

PERRY
Mommy isn't going anywhere, son.

On that note, he turns to his wife.

PERRY (CONT'D)
You're not seriously thinking about coming to dinner in your condition?

ADELAIDE
As a matter of fact, actually.

PERRY
But you're ill. I'll have that servant boy bring something up, and some milk for Dorothy.

ADELAIDE
Don't bother. I'm coming down. And so is she.

Perry is frustrated. He turns away.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)
I want to meet these people.

PERRY
(guarded)
Why?

ADELAIDE
I don't understand you. A couple hours ago you were determined to keep me next to you like a dog. Now you want to box me up.

PERRY
I just want to protect you, that's all.

ADELAIDE
Don't be ridiculous. Protect me from what? That drunk? You can deal with him, can't you? Well I can deal with a cold. You're being overprotective, dear.

PERRY
(raising his voice)
I'm not overprotective.

Dorothy begins to cry from a bundle on the bed.

ADELAIDE

Oh, here we go. You feel like you have to *walk your son* around the house. He's old enough to explore on his own, you know.

Perry looks at his son worriedly. She's struck a chord.

Perry Jr scuffs his foot, anxious around his fighting parents.

PERRY

(crestfallen)
...of course he is.
(to Perry Jr)
Go on. Be back before supertime, okay?

Perry Jr nods eagerly.

Perry puts his hand on his son's shoulder and kneels down so they are eye to eye.

PERRY (CONT'D)

Don't bother any of the strangers, okay? This is very important. We don't know anything about them, and they might not like little boys very much. They could want to hurt you.

A very serious boy, Perry Jr takes this to heart.

PERRY (CONT'D)

Yes, daddy.

Perry scuffles the boy's hair, then releases him. He turns and trots out of the room, glee on his face.

PERRY (CONT'D)

(after him)
And don't run!

Adelaide looks at her husband with a new respect. It doesn't take long, however, for this to turn into a full blown coughing fit.

She bends over and begins to hack spots onto the carpet. Perry looks around in horror for a cloth.

Finally it subsides and Perry breathes in relief.

PERRY (CONT'D)
 You're staying in tonight, and
 we're getting a doctor for you
 first thing in the morning.

Adelaide nods weakly.

ADELAIDE
 (faint)
 I'm sorry Perry. You were right.
 Just like before.

He hugs her and, rocking her back and forth, kisses her on
 the top of her head.

PERRY
 Hush.

INT. CLAIRE'S ROOM - EVENING

Claire stands in front of her vanity. She hums to herself
 something smooth as she paints her neck from a bottle of
 perfume.

The door behind her swings silently, slowly open. She
 doesn't notice, putting on lipstick close to the mirror.

The head of Perry Jr slides out from the opening. He's
 curious.

When Claire pulls back from the mirror she spots him and
 jumps.

She spins around and puts her hands on her hips; falsely
 indignant.

CLAIRE
 (pretending to be stern)
 Well, you naughty little boy!

She laughs. The outburst scares Perry Jr who, remembering
 his father's warning, ducks out.

His footsteps, uneven and clumsy, recede down the hallway
 outside.

Claire furrows her brow.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
 (after him)
 Wait! Oh, I didn't mean...!

She puts down the perfume and follows him out of the room, leaving her door open.

On the side of the perfume bottle is written, "IF SWALLOWED, IMMEDIATELY CONTACT YOUR PHYSICIAN FOR ASSISTANCE," or some part of it.

INT. STAIRWELL - EVENING

Tiffany, in a nice dress and her pearl necklace, is climbing the circular stairs to the guest quarters with a glass of scotch when Perry Jr's footsteps approach, staccato.

Suddenly, he's on her. They collide and some of Tiffany's drink splashes narrowly past her onto the floor.

Perry Jr recoils and falls against the rising stairs behind him.

TIFFANY

Clumsy! Watch where you're going!

PERRY JR

(stammering and alarmed)

I- I'm sorry. I didn't know you were there.

He stands up and dusts off his trousers.

TIFFANY

I'll have to take your word for it.
You're a little devil, aren't you?

Tiffany stares at him. Something about him upsets her.

PERRY JR

Actually, my name is Perry Wyss Jr.

He extends a hand.

TIFFANY

Yes, I know.

She shakes his hand, a weepy little smile creeping out of her outraged expression.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

We met a long time ago, when you were very young. My name's Tiffany.

PERRY JR

Oh. You're not going to tell my
parents are you?

She frowns, almost in tears for some reason.

PERRY JR (CONT'D)

Only I'm not supposed to run in the
house.

She shakes her head.

TIFFANY

(solemnly)

No, I would never.

Perry Jr grins conspiratorially at her.

Awkward beat while Tiffany recovers herself, wipes her eyes.

Out of left field:

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

How's your mother?

Perry Jr shrugs sadly.

PERRY JR

I don't know.

Tiffany looks very guilty about this fact.

TIFFANY

Neither do I.

Perry Jr doesn't follow this at all. He smiles to make up
for it.

Tiffany's eyes begin to tear up again, her face scrunches up.

She reaches out a hand to touch Perry Jr's face, when Claire
comes down the stairs.

CLAIRE

Good Lord, what's this?

Tiffany pulls back her hand and composes herself quickly.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

That is a child, Tiffany. Out of
bounds, even for a tramp like you.

Tiffany's whole character changes, from vulnerable to acid.

TIFFANY

I was just going to slap the little
snot for knocking me over and
almost ruining my dress. Running
from you, probably.

Claire frowns, concerned.

CLAIRE

Actually, he was.
(to Perry Jr)
I'm not going to hurt you...

She looks around, behind her. He's gone.

Claire gives Tiffany a querulous look.

Tiffany turns aside, cold shoulder, and marches up the stairs
past her.

TIFFANY

(mutters)
Immature...

She's gone.

CLAIRE

(after her)
Did you mean me?

EXT. GRAVEYARD - EVENING

Colin, his breath heavy and white, shovels dirt onto Mr.
Anger's grave. He's still in his suit.

He takes a breather and leans on the handle of his shovel,
then shades his eyes to gaze at one window of the distant
mansion: Janice's room.

INT. JANICE'S ROOM - EVENING

Janice lies on her bed, clothed in a nice dinner dress. The
room is illuminated only by the fading light from the window,
but her eyes are bright.

On closer examination: with tears.

She takes a determined breath and then rises stiffly. She's
forcing herself to stand up, to walk to the window.

She undoes the latch and pushes the window open.

EXT. JANICE'S ROOM - EVENING

Grimly, she puts one foot out onto the window ledge and looks down: a long drop, enough to break her neck. Good. No... The thought of falling strikes her and she tenses up, her body unwilling to let her keep going.

A beat, and her determination reigns once more. The other foot follows the first out onto the ledge.

She leans away from the window, teetering... tottering... almost ready to jump.

Then in the distance, she sees Colin, a thin shape on the grass out in the graveyard. She freezes, afraid of what he'll do.

She's flustered, not so sure anymore. She reels, looks down again and gasps, then side to side... she's frightened all of a sudden. Her legs shake and her hands grip the window frame behind her.

INT. JANICE'S ROOM - EVENING

She's back inside. She closes the window and hides out of Colin's sight, her head slumped against the wall.

She takes some deep breaths and is almost calm. She brushes off her dress and wipes her eyes. Then she tentatively heads for the door.

She's almost there when a man's footsteps sound outside and stop just behind her door.

She listens. Instead of a knock, a note is slipped underneath. Then, the footsteps recede.

Janice picks up the note, decorated like the one Colin delivered to Jack (with a tree festooned with eyes instead of apples), except it's been ripped open already.

On the note is written, "I'm watching you!"

Janice begins to panic again. Her breathing becomes short and sharp, and she tosses the note from her as she stands.

She rushes to the window and looks out. Colin's gone.

Frightened, she returns to the bed and lies down in the same position she started in.

Like then, her eyes are bright with tears.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen is quite a noisy place. Kettles squeal on and off, water boils, Byron, aproned, chops at a stack of onions with practiced and brutal ease.

Underneath it all there's something else. Byron cocks his head, tear-streaked from the onions, to hear it: a child's sobbing.

He puts down his butcher's knife and navigates the kitchen in search of the source.

He powers down the kettles; he takes the water off the range; he turns off the bank of dishwashers installed under the sink.

Byron finds him underneath a wheeled countertop in the middle of the room. He opens one of its ground-level cabinet doors and there he is: Perry Jr, crammed into the space with some detergents; he starts crying anew when he sees Byron.

BYRON
(he snaps)
What are you doing?

Perry Jr looks up, helplessly. He can't say.

Byron's expression softens a little.

BYRON (CONT'D)
These onions are pretty potent, I think you'll agree.

Byron sniffs, as his nose is running.

PERRY JR
(terrified)
Please don't tell my dad.

BYRON
Why not? Chopping vegetables is no crime.

PERRY JR
Please don't tell him I bothered you.

BYRON
Hah. That doesn't seem to be the real problem. The question seems to be - what's bothering you?

PERRY JR
 (recalling Tiffany's
 insult)
 I'm a little snot.

Byron looks surprised at this information. He sniffs.

BYRON
 Where were you educated, child?

He holds up one finger to excuse himself while with the other he lifts his apron and blows his nose noisily into it.

He shows the result to Perry Jr.

BYRON (CONT'D)
 That's a little snot.

PERRY JR
 (surprised)
 Ew!

Perry Jr smiles a little. He reaches out and grabs a handful of Byron's apron and begins to pull it to his face. Byron snatches it back.

BYRON
 Ah ah ah! Get your own.

PERRY JR
 Where?

BYRON
 Why don't you go on upstairs to the dining room. You can use one of the linens on the table. Put Silas to work for a change. Besides, I bet it would bother your daddy.

Byron grins at him. Perry Jr grins back.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

This room accommodates a long and heavy wooden table. The object has been fit together with several leafs and draped with a floral tablecloth. Despite the tablecloth, it has a warped and broken surface. Several of the guests have already taken places in handsome chairs along the sides to await dinner.

There's Jack who rests his head in one hand and stares with hungover misery at Claire (or past her).

Claire, while attempting to avoid eye contact, pretends great interest in a vivid Japanese wall-hang of somebody vomiting, or possibly expelling forceful breath.

Sean, uncomfortable in the silence, idly begs attention by filling his cheeks with air and then relaxing, letting it sort of splat out.

Rubin, mouth pursed, examines a grotesque African statuette that's just a mash of ebony limbs.

Meanwhile Perry, a finger to his lips, studies a large book christened "Forms of Carcinogenic Cellular Reproduction."

Next to him, Perry Jr fidgets in his chair, looking sly.

Tiffany has placed herself in the opposite spot at the table where she channels both boredom and irritability.

Janice walks quietly in from one of the entrances, frightened of everyone at the table.

Being the only moving thing in the room, all eyes are immediately turned to her; this really freaks her out and she stops in her tracks.

She takes a deep breath, then takes her place at the table. Immediately, she jumps up with a gasp. She's seen the tablecloth: an elegant network of vines that culminate not in fruit but in stylized human eyes, like those on her threatening letter.

She becomes aware of everyone's curiosity, so she forces herself to sit.

CLAIRE

Everything ok, dearie?

Janice smiles in forced gratitude.

JANICE

Yes. I'm just a little dizzy.

CLAIRE

Hungry, no doubt.

JANICE

That must be it.

TIFFANY

Nah, it's because she's American.

This amuses Sean, who chuckles. Grateful, she shoots him a sexy smile.

RUBIN

I have nothing against Americans.

JACK

I do. My parents are American.

Chuckles. Tiffany scowls at Jack for getting the attention.

SEAN

Well, whatever your nationality,
thank you Miss for getting us
talking in here. You'd think we
were gathering for another funeral.

Janice laughs nervously.

A gong rings and Colin and Silas enter, pushing along several carts laden with steaming food and wine. They pause by the side of the table and begin to unload dishes as the guests continue to chat:

PERRY

Fantastic. Any longer without food
and there really would have been
another funeral.

CLAIRE

What's really *tragic* is that we
haven't been introduced to each
other yet.

SEAN

Excellent point.
(to Janice)
I'm Sean Urbanowski. I used to be
an olympic sprinter if you can
believe it. I competed in world-
class competitions for several
years, uh, running.

He chuckles at his pun.

TIFFANY

And now you're an olympic bore?

Sean frowns, hurt.

CLAIRE

(to Janice)
Anyway, what's your name, honey?

Colin watches her particularly for her answer while ladling a poached something.

JANICE

Janice.

CLAIRE

Claire Gauthier. Singer. Pleased to meet you.

JANICE

I'm just a no one.

RUBIN

(firmly)

Of course you're not. I assure you, you have a brother in me. People like *us* have to stick together.

Janice doesn't get that he means because of their skin. She furrows her brow.

JANICE

Um...?

RUBIN

I am Mister Ndaji. From Kenya. Rubin, to my friends and my family.

He nods to Sean then gives Janice a friendly little wink.

TIFFANY

And I'm Tiffany.
(at Perry)
Tiffers to the men I fuck.

Uncomfortable silence. Jack snickers audibly.

CLAIRE

Anyway; so what's your name, Mister hangover?

JACK

None of your business.

CLAIRE

Oh come on.

JACK

(tetchy)

Fine. You can call me rich, because I'm the son of Mister Anger, so you all can go fuck yourselves.

The other guests glance at each other, slightly confused.

PERRY

Excuse me, did you say you were the son of Mister Anger?

Murmurs. This is what they were all thinking.

JACK

Was I so hard to understand? Go fu-

Silas interrupts them by tapping a wine glass at the head of the table.

SILAS

If I could have your attention, I would like to say a few words before we... begin.

The guests fall silent. He grins.

SILAS (CONT'D)

Earlier today I spoke of a great man: a man of the world. He traveled this wide earth spreading the seed of his philosophy, always searching for perfection. Sadly, with his passing, the perfection of his estate, which he held me to, has begun to wither.

He gestures at some examples of tarnish on the dinner dishes, some tattering in the curtains, some scuffing on the mantelpiece.

SILAS (CONT'D)

Myself and my handful of servants are not enough to maintain its heart. Perhaps excepting Colin here, we are all withering away, you know. Our time is near. Mister Anger's great wealth requires an inheritor. It requires one *now*.

Jack smiles indulgently.

SILAS (CONT'D)

My master's dying wish was that the world he traveled so widely be for once brought home to him, the world he helped create over the many energetic years he served as a scientist, as a leader, and as a father... Ladies and gentlemen, behold! his handiwork.

He spreads his arms wide before the assembly.

SILAS (CONT'D)
His bastard children, all.

A shocked silence, then: alarm. Rubin turns to Sean. Perry looks at Tiffany in terror. Claire shakes her head. Janice looks shocked outright. Jack stares darkly.

SILAS (CONT'D)
Please. Quiet.

He bangs the wine glass again.

SILAS (CONT'D)
Mister Anger hoped that by coming together you might reconcile with one another, and with him. He always regretted not meeting his children, but knew there would be those among you not suitable to carry on his legacy. You have one week to deliberate. In the absence of a will, those of you still here after then will officially be his heirs.

Murmurs. He smiles a little wickedly.

SILAS (CONT'D)
Enjoy your meal.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Perry addresses the guests, most of whom have engaged in eating their meals. There is duck with fruit, two soups, one cream, one broth, a salad with nuts and cheese, and a variety of thick, crusty baguettes that have since been sliced and buttered by eager hands.

PERRY
As a biologist, I feel confident in saying that, based on your stated ages, it's entirely plausible that an active and vigorous eighty year old could have sired us all. What that says about his ethical alignment, I can't say.

CLAIRE
(nodding at Janice)
But look at her.
(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

She's just a child. Our supposed father must have been over sixty when...

She sets down a forkful of food distastefully.

JACK

This is the stupidest thing I've ever heard.

RUBIN

You should really address your family more respectfully.

JACK

Shut up. I'm not part of your family.

RUBIN

The situation sounds perfectly reasonable to me.

PERRY

There's no way to be sure until we can get it tested. I was going to contact a doctor tomorrow anyway.

SEAN

It will still take a long time to get any results.

JACK

I don't care. I'm not related to you assholes.

PERRY

I guess that means you'll be gone before the week's out, won't it?

Jack scowls into his food, then stabs it.

CLAIRE

Well I for one am excited by the possibility I might have so many new relatives.

TIFFANY

You obviously don't know some of us.

CLAIRE

But I want to! What do you do, Tiffany?

TIFFANY
 (defiant)
 I'm a whore.

Perry is beginning to look faint.

Claire tries to shrug it off.

CLAIRE
 Well... you won't be forced to do
 that much longer if this
 inheritance thing is true.

Perry grabs his napkin, still folded on the table, and begins to mop his brow with it.

TIFFANY
 Who says anyone's forcing me?

Perry pulls the napkin away from his forehead and stares into it, bemused, then disgusted.

He turns and looks at Perry Jr, eating his food obediently, and sighs. Perry Jr ignores him scrupulously.

Perry, already irritable, starts to get upset.

PERRY
 (to his son, fiercely)
 You and I are going to have words
 later about your manners.
 (about the napkin)
 This is disgusting.

RUBIN
 Is something the matter?

Perry pulls away from his son, adopting a stony expression.

PERRY
 Just a family thing.

TIFFANY
 (condescending)
 Don't mind him. Pewwy's been
 having a lot of those today.

Perry squints at her.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)
 (innocent)
 I overheard you and your wife
 arguing this morning. It was hard
 not to, frankly.
 (MORE)

TIFFANY (CONT'D)
Are you two getting along okay?
Where is your one true love?

Perry clears his throat.

PERRY
(pointed)
We did have an event, but we put it
behind us as we always do. In our
family, we adopt the attitude that
cooperation is essential to our
continued existence.

Sean chuckles.

SEAN
Sounds good to me.

PERRY
In fact, I am something of an
expert on the subject of the theory
of evolution as it relates to
cooperation and community.

Claire feigns interest. Jack rolls his eyes.

PERRY (CONT'D)
I've spent several years working to
prove the assumption that symbiotic
organisms are the favored unit in
evolutionary design. You may not
be aware, but...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Silas and Byron stand in defeat around a platter laden with a huge jelly. The object has already been heaved a fraction of its length off of one of the countertops, but that small distance seems to have taken the wind out of its bearers, who huff and wheeze.

Mona watches from the doorway with as close to a sardonic look as her expressionless face can achieve. Her parakeet perches on the edge of the platter and taunts them with the occasional chirp.

SILAS
Christ, what were you thinking?

BYRON
Shut up. It made sense in my head.

SILAS

It does make sense if you consider
that you lost yours a long time
ago.

BYRON

Where's that damn servant boy?
(shouting)
Colin!

SILAS

He's trying out chef's hats, I
hope.

BYRON

I don't think he's really pulling
his weight around here.

Their brief ruse of irritability collapses; they can't help
but laugh at the joke.

SILAS

They're going to be finished with
dinner any moment now.

BYRON

Pigs. In my day...

SILAS

...you could lift heavier objects
than your cigar box?

Snickers.

BYRON

Mona, go get Colin if you're not
going to help us men.

SILAS

(sarcastic)
Yes, leave it to these strapping
men.

Mona sniffs, then crooks a finger at her parakeet. It flaps
over and perches on it.

Then she glides out.

BYRON

She'll never make it in time.

As soon as she's out of view, Silas turns to Byron and grins.

SILAS

Exactly. Get us some spoons.

He gestures at the jelly.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Perry continues to lecture on his life's work. The other guests have since glazed over, their plates scraped scrupulously clean while Perry's remains half-full. Sean is the only one still mildly lucid, with Jack having fallen asleep against the back of his chair, Tiffany long-lost staring into space, and Claire and Janice whispering between each other a clandestine conversation.

PERRY

... the preternatural paradigms of capitalist gladiators and competitive entrepreneurship are actually sociopathic constructions. Corporation is a commendable way to create task-based community, but today they are brought together based on only the atavistic principle of hunting and then consuming other corporate entities, themselves no more sophisticated than feudal nation-states.

The only thing that could possibly interrupt him, does: Adelaide walks in, bouncing Dorothy in her arms. There's a fresh glow in her cheeks, and she smiles at him.

ADELAIDE

I've heard this one before.

The other guests are roused. They turn in their chairs; grateful greetings are extended.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

How do you all do? My name is Adelaide Wyss. The person who you are talking... uh, who is talking, is my husband.

CLAIRE

Very nice to meet you.

SEAN

Yes, a pleasure.

ADELAIDE

Charmed.

PERRY
What are you doing here, Addy?

She beams.

ADELAIDE
I happen to be feeling much better.

TIFFANY
That's a relief.

Perry shoots her a warning glance.

PERRY
Well at least come sit down, honey.

ADELAIDE
(proudly)
I think I'd rather stand.

RUBIN
(to Perry)
You were saying, about cooperation?

Jack laughs, still bleary.

JANICE
Oh, what a sweet little baby!
What's her name?

ADELAIDE
This is Dorothy, and she thinks
you're sweet for asking.

TIFFANY
Those are lovely pearls you're
wearing, and your hair is done so
nicely!

She points at her own pearls, hair, done the same way.

Perry seethes.

ADELAIDE
That's how my husband likes it.

Tiffany giggles.

PERRY
All right-

TIFFANY
I bet we have so much in common!

ADELAIDE

Except you are much better dressed.
I don't know what I was thinking
with this.

She gestures at her dress.

PERRY

Okay, that's-

TIFFANY

Are you kidding? This is my work
dress.

ADELAIDE

Your work dress! You must be a
model.

TIFFANY

Yeah, maybe to the drunk idiots I
have to work with.

Polite laughter between them.

Sean turns a sympathetic eye on Perry.

SEAN

Perry, why don't you and I take a
walk down to the library where we
can finish your conversation?

Perry's gaze lingers angrily on Tiffany, then he tosses his
napkin onto his plate and stands up.

PERRY

(to Adelaide)

It's almost Perry Junior's bedtime.
Get him ready, will you?

Adelaide nods absently, then Sean ushers Perry out.

Adelaide makes a sardonic face at Tiffany; it's returned.

ADELAIDE

I'd better go. Come on, Perry.

TIFFANY

It was nice meeting you.

ADELAIDE

And you. Talk to you tomorrow!

Tiffany smirks.

TIFFANY

Hopefully.

Adelaide chuckles.

ADELAIDE

Oh, he'll get over it. He's just cranky.

She rolls her eyes, then takes Perry Jr by the hand and leads him out of the room.

Claire shrugs and stands up. She nods at Jack, who has fallen asleep again.

CLAIRE

Well, *that* looks like a good idea to me. I'm going to call it a night, folks.

Rubin mumbles his agreement and begins to rise. Tiffany doesn't acknowledge her, but does get up. The two of them slip out at various paces.

Claire is about to follow, but notices that Janice hasn't stirred.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Aren't you coming?

JANICE

I'll be up soon. I figure someone has to make sure he gets back to his room.

She points at Jack.

CLAIRE

You're a sweetheart. Just be careful, okay? None of us know that much about each other yet.

Janice nods. Claire swans out.

Janice smiles after her. After a beat she turns her attention back to Jack, and jumps in her seat. He's sitting there, completely sober, with a predatory grin, staring at her.

JACK

I've been watching you.

The blood drains out of Janice's face.

JANICE

Wh- What?

JACK

Don't play dumb. I know that you ran away from your step-father. Very smart. He's looking for you, you know. And...

He smirks.

JACK (CONT'D)

I know where he can find his precious girl.

Janice is terrified.

JANICE

Oh God. What do you want?

Jack smiles.

JACK

Just to protect you. I'm a friend of the family, you could say.

JANICE

He'll beat me, or worse, if I go back.

JACK

He loves you, Janice. He'd be upset if something happened to you.

JANICE

(cautious)

What do you mean? Like what?

JACK

Baby, things are going to get rough around here before the week is over. It's only a matter of time before these nice people start fighting for a bigger share of my father's inheritance. That's the way people are. You're going to get caught in the middle unless you have someone watching out for you.

Janice looks at him with despair.

JACK (CONT'D)

I suggest an alliance. You give me your share of the inheritance, I protect you, and I won't tell your daddy where you are.

Janice stands up, outraged but teary. She struggles with what she's about to say, then finally grips a handful of the tablecloth and leans forward.

JANICE

That money is my only chance of being someone someday; it's my ticket out of here. Thanks *Jack*, but I'd rather die on my own terms.

Holding back a sob, she flees the room. Jack sucks on his teeth and watches her go.

His eyebrows prick up as he hears footsteps approaching.

Instantly, his eyes roam the table and find a glass of scotch someone hadn't finished drinking.

He closes his eyes and tosses it in his own face, then wipes it off with his sleeve.

By the time Claire has arrived, his aspect has changed completely. He slumps forward on the table and stares at the empty glass in his hand.

Claire approaches him.

CLAIRE

Where's Janice?

JACK

(slurred)

I think I scared her off.

She sniffs the air.

CLAIRE

You're foul.

JACK

You got that right.

CLAIRE

You know you've got a problem.

JACK

Yeah, I know. I don't need you to... It's just...

He trails off. Claire, thinking she's getting somewhere, sits down on the seat beside him and looks at him seriously.

CLAIRE

You don't have to be like this.
When we met this morning you were
lots of fun, before...

She eyes the snifter. Jack chuckles.

JACK

Yeah?

CLAIRE

Yeah!

JACK

Shit. I'm sorry for being such an
ass. I'm just kind of down on my
luck. I have a hard time staying
in control, you know?

Claire smiles ruefully at him.

CLAIRE

Could you use some help?

JACK

What, like a fucking support group?

CLAIRE

No, just someone to talk to. Talk
out your troubles instead of
drowning them. And if you like, I
can let you know when you've gone
over the line.

JACK

(pithy)

You want to be my friend?

CLAIRE

Only if you're going to be
friendly.

Jack appears to consider this. He holds out his hand.

JACK

An alliance.

Claire takes it and shakes it.

CLAIRE

Yeah.

She pulls him up by the hand.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Now let's get you to bed.

Jack staggers a little.

JACK
Whoa, baby, you make me dizzy.

Claire chuckles.

EXT. JANICE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Janice stands on the edge of the ledge below her window, finally under cover of night. A frosty pull from the east whips her hair and reddens her face. Her eyes water; not from the wind.

JANICE
(broken)
Oh God.

This time, she's ready. She closes her eyes... and lets go.

EXT. JANICE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Colin grabs Janice as she tilts off the window.

COLIN
Got you.

One hand around her waist, he drags her, squirming, in through her bedroom window.

INT. JANICE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Colin shushes Janice gently as he sets her feet down on the carpet. She punches him ineffectually a couple of times around the shoulders.

JANICE
I'm going to die!

Finally, she gives up and rests her head on his chest. He holds her.

COLIN
Shhhhh. You're not going to die.
I've got you.

Janice looks up at his face, paler than ever in the light from the moon.

JANICE

You don't understand. Now I'm going to die.

Colin just stares at her.

INT. SERVANT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Silas and Byron relax in this cramped storage room. Byron lights a cigar and puts his feet up on a barrel. A satisfied grin migrates onto his face.

BYRON

About time we had a break. Those kids have it easy. No worries in the world.

SILAS

They're an interesting bunch, though.

BYRON

God couldn't help us if they weren't. You servants are probably the most boring people I have ever known. And I've been around.

SILAS

Come on, Byron. We have good times.

BYRON

You call *spring cleaning* a good time.

Silas rubs his arms, chilly.

SILAS

You're right, I *am* rather looking forward to spring.

BYRON

As, I expect, are the guests. Greedy buggers.

SILAS

Yes. That Jack fellow in particular worries me. I don't like him at all.

BYRON

I don't think anyone likes Jack.

SILAS

Not because he's such a lush.
Something else...

BYRON

It *is* kind of creepy how he looks
at that little girl. The black
one.

Silas smiles, an opportunity to jibe his friend has presented
itself.

SILAS

You're just a jealous old
pedophile.

Byron chortles.

BYRON

What, worse than you?

Silas sniffs.

SILAS

There's only one girl out there for
me.

INT. UPPER HALLWAY - NIGHT

With a click, Colin emerges from, then closes, the door to
Janice's room, smiling to himself.

He makes for the far end of the hallway, but stops dead when
he sees Mona standing motionless in front of him. He waves
half-heartedly.

COLIN

Okay, okay. I'm sorry. I'm on my
way now.

He turns around and walks quickly towards the stairwell at
the other end of the hall.

He stops dead once more. On the floor in front of him squats
Mona's parakeet. It flaps its wings aggressively.

COLIN (CONT'D)

(to the parakeet)

I said I'm sorry. It won't happen
again.

He turns to look after Mona but she's disappeared.

The parakeet lifts off and flies past Colin down the hall, disappearing around a corner.

INT. SERVANT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Silas and Byron, as before.

SILAS
What about that African?

BYRON
The girl or the man?

SILAS
Don't be crass.

Byron winks at his friend.

BYRON
I think he's out of his depth. He
doesn't really fit in does he?

SILAS
He tries hard.

BYRON
Too hard.

INT. GUEST BATHROOM NUMBER 1 - NIGHT

A marble surface embedded with a handful of ornate sinks separates Rubin, dressed in grey sweats, from a wide mirror on the wall. He's just finishing up flossing.

Next to him, Sean, in a pair of tight boxer-briefs, brushes his teeth.

Rubin notices Sean's bicep flexing as he brushes.

RUBIN
You keep in very good shape my
friend. Your accident has not
truly slowed you down.

After tossing his floss, he approaches Sean and squeezes his arm. He nods in approval.

RUBIN (CONT'D)
You make me wish I was young again.

Sean stops brushing, stares at him queerly.

SEAN
 (around a mouthful of
 paste)
 Thanks...

Satisfied, Rubin moves to leave. Before he does:

RUBIN
 I hope you sleep well, as we can
 only hope who are separated from
 those we love.

Sean stares after him after he leaves.

Then, in a hurry, he spits out his toothpaste and rinses his mouth.

BYRON (V.O.)
 If you think the African tries too
 hard what do you call the Chinese?

Sean hurries out of the bathroom after Rubin.

INT. UPPER HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sean trots out of the bathroom. Tiffany, in a loose camisole and shorts, is waiting for him in the corridor. She looks impressed. She blocks his way.

SILAS (V.O.)
 Multiply diseased, I'd hazard.

TIFFANY
 Off to get your beauty sleep?

Sean tries to slip past, but fails.

SEAN
 Ah, um. Yes, Ms. Cheng.

TIFFANY
 What a waste.

SEAN
 Pardon me. I'm in a hurry.

He pushes past her as politely as he can.

Tiffany follows him down the hall, where he stops.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Do you know which of these rooms is
Rubin's?

Tiffany shakes her head, pouty.

Sean grunts and paces a little.

TIFFANY

Which one's yours?

Sean points at one of the doors, then walks to it. Tiffany
follows along.

SEAN

I guess... I'll just turn in.

TIFFANY

You look tense. I could loosen you
up a little.

Sean frowns at her.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

Free of charge.

Sean gets it. He smiles a bashful little smile.

SEAN

No thank you. It's very kind of
you, but... no. Have a good night,
okay?

He glances past Tiffany out into the hallway one last time,
then closes his door with a frustrated sigh.

INT. SERVANT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Byron laughs a wheezing laugh that goes on for a little too
long. It turns into a bit of a cough.

BYRON

Disgusting.

SILAS

I expect you slipped something into
that jelly you made, not actually
intending for anyone but yourself
to consume it. Am I right?

BYRON

I don't remember. I hope not,
because I sent a jar of it up for
the Wyss boy to have before bed.
He's a good kid, you know.

SILAS

I wouldn't know. But I think he's
got the right idea about bed.

Silas gets up and cracks his neck. He nods at Byron, who
nods back with irritation.

BYRON

You're a pushover.

SILAS

And you're a dissolute old hack.

They smile at each other. Silas opens the door and walks
out.

SILAS (CONT'D)

'Night old friend.

INT. THE WYSS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Adelaide is back in her room, once again feeling unwell. She
holds a hot water bottle to her middle and sweats under the
covers of her bed. She's propped herself up against the
headboard in order to keep an eye on Dorothy, who plays with
trinkets in a bundle of clothes at the foot of the bed.

She coughs.

Perry Jr sits at the desk, shoveling jello into his mouth
from a jar.

The door opens and an enthusiastic Perry saunters in. He
doesn't seem to notice her condition.

PERRY

What a place! I think I'm going to
like it better here than I thought.
I'm sorry you and the kids have had
to wait on me. But Addy, it was
glorious! The Anger library is
full of mysteries: books on every
aspect of natural science,
religion, social systems; by God,
the old man must have had a great
mind. A towering mind. There is
no question he was my father.

(MORE)

PERRY (CONT'D)

We have so much in common. He even owns a copy of my work! Can you believe it? He knew me through my research.

(he tears up with excitement)

I may not have been able to meet him, but he knew me through my work.

(an idea comes to him)

Perhaps he had notes of his own. He must have. I could discover them, carry on where he left off, learn about this legacy of mine that I never knew existed, this... inheritance!

He laughs to himself. Adelaide stares at him distantly.

Perry Jr stops eating and turns to watch his parents, prescient when something important is happening.

PERRY (CONT'D)

(giddy)

It's like in the fairy tales when the peasant discovers he's a prince. It's a vindication of my work as a scientist. The naysayers, who compete and brawl with each other, will never treat Doctor Wyss... Doctor *Anger* with such disrespect, such rudeness, such bile fit only for a carrier of mange and fleas - and so! So... their reputations will crumble while mine will rise. Their dreams crushed while mine are restored. Their piggish faces revering, when at last they realize that cooperation is the only evolutionary path still open to us as a race -- a race even now dissolving in a tincture...

(trailing off)

...running out of time.

He turns to Adelaide.

PERRY (CONT'D)

Isn't this fantastic?

ADELAIDE

(weak)

Yes, dear.

She stands up and immediately wobbles, knocking her cup of tea off of the dresser.

It smashes on the floor.

Perry frowns down at it, then up at her.

PERRY

I thought you were okay?

ADELAIDE

Yes, I am. Please don't think...
it's nothing... I'm just going to
go to the toilet for a moment.
Stay with the kids, okay honey?

She presses a hand to her chest and smiles wanly at Perry as she shuffles out of the room. Perry blinks after her.

He turns to Perry Jr, seemingly for advice. The boy stares back at him, very serious as usual.

Perry sighs, then begins to clean up the smashed teacup.

INT. MONA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mona's room is a dressing room, with long mirrors, a shelf, a single bare bulb, and a thin wiry bed in the corner. Mona's parakeet perches on a pair of false teeth on her bedside table.

Mona sits at the shelf in evening dress. She's surrounded by an audience of foam heads, each sporting a wig with a different color or cut. One is bare.

She removes her hair - itself a wig - and places it on the empty head. This exposes her bare scalp - flaked and spotted, populated with a handful of wiry hairs.

Then she climbs into bed and pulls the covers up to her chin.

From outside, a knock.

SILAS (O.S.)

Nice work today, Mona. You did the
right thing, you know that, don't
you?

Mona looks at the door, but doesn't respond.

SILAS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I'll see you in the morning.

A pregnant pause.

SILAS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Good night.

Silas's footsteps recede.

The parakeet ruffles its feathers and SQUAWKS.

PARAKEET
Good night!

INT. SMOKING ROOM - NIGHT

Dominated by browns, this room with its sturdy leather chairs, its coffee table (quite scuffed by raised feet over the years), its ashtrays, and its cozy little fireplace, was meant for fraternal affairs.

Conversation pieces, mostly in a hunting-related theme, adorn the walls. Portraits of elk and reindeer, stuffed birds and beasts, and an exceedingly long hunting rifle on top of the mantelpiece are prominently displayed.

The fine examples of taxidermy, with their glittering eyes and lacquered snouts, are snuffed out with a SNAP as the lights flash off.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

The library is windowless and shadowy and cramped. All the books with their leather covers absorb any of the electric light not gobbled up by the deep browns of the wooden furniture. Two of the walls are bookspace, packed tight. The floor is just as packed.

There's a rocking chair, a heavy study desk, and multitudes of drawers that compete with each other for what's left of the wall. The surfaces available -- the top of the chair, for example, the desk, a corner even of the floor: all are covered in arcane objects. There are crystal balls, dreamcatchers, medicine pouches, wrinkled academic papers in longhand, mineral samples, an astrolabe.

Magnified behind a pair of spectacles: a cockroach, scuttling over the brickerbrack.

On this, the lights SNAP out.

INT. LOWER PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

A serviceway, this hall is not nearly as elegant as its upstairs cousins. There are no potted plants, elegant light fixtures; there is no wallpaper on the wall, and the brickwork is simple and, in some places, worn.

Silas walks down the creaking corridor, muttering softly to himself. He opens a breaker box on the wall and inserts a key into a slot next to some fuse indicators.

He turns the key and the lights all along the hallway behind him SNAP out.

He proceeds further down the hallway to a second box and repeats the process. SNAP! He leaves an endless black void behind him as he goes.

Silas disengages from this last box and continues on his way when suddenly Colin emerges from a tributary and the two servants almost collide..

Colin jumps back and clutches his heart, maybe spooked in the low light.

He gasps.

COLIN

Mr. Ambrosier? Oh...

SILAS

If only I'd been the terror you thought I was, there might be some justice. Do you know you've been wanted most of the night, boy?

COLIN

Yes, sir.
(anxious)
I'm sorry sir.

SILAS

Been busy providing "services" for our guests?

Colin straightens his shirt and hangs his head a little.

COLIN

(embarrassed)
I have, sir.

SILAS

Yes... just don't forget who pays you, and keeps you.

(MORE)

SILAS (CONT'D)

And never forget that you owe this family more than just your job.

(steely)

See that your remaining duties are attended to.

COLIN

I will, sir.

Colin skirts around Silas. He walks stiffly into the darkness.

Silas smiles to himself as he watches the boy go.

Then, from somewhere in the house above, a woman's SCREAM.

INT. UPPER HALLWAY - NIGHT

A long upper hallway that culminates at the end in a second bathroom for houseguests. Well decorated in a placid theme, the hallway is the site of more activity than it was designed to pacify:

A clot of guests, Tiffany, Rubin, Sean, Janice and Claire block the entry to the bathroom. They're agitated about something inside.

Rapid footsteps approach and then recede as Perry swoops past, running for the bathroom door. He's panting hard, more than just physically agitated.

He stops at the portal, pushes past the others.

Audible: Perry sobbing. Then, screaming,

PERRY

Oh, my God! My God!

Closer: Sean shakes his head, slowly.

Closer: Tiffany looks at the other guests around her; her eyes get wilder by the second.

Close: Claire averts her eyes from:

INT. GUEST BATHROOM NUMBER 2 - NIGHT

Adelaide lies crumpled and dead next to one of several toilets, her hair tangled and vivid against the white tiles and harsh light of the bathroom. Bloody vomit and hand prints cover the seat and side of the toilet, and pool on the floor next to her mouth.

Perry crouches down next to her, holding her as best he can. He rocks back and forth and gibbers.

Jack and Colin flank the scene. Jack's mouth twitches.

He turns and looks seriously at Janice, still standing in the doorway to the room; does she get it? She shrinks away.

Colin can't take his eyes off Adelaide. They widen steadily until his whole face collapses and he lurches over to retch in the nearby sink.

He lifts himself up out of the basin, then looks at the turned backs of the others. His eyes are cold again, suspicious.

He slices through the cloud of guests, out of the room, and into the hall beyond.

The lights snap black as he leaves.