

ASHES TO ASHES
Episode 2

"Ambient Darkness"

by
Drew Castalia

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ACT 1

INT. DRAWING ROOM - DAY

An airy, sunlight room filled to the brim with studded armchairs, tables of various proportions, and potted ferns.

CLAIRE has trapped SILAS in a corner where, with nowhere to go, he stands rigid as a broom. She enthuses to him over a RECORD which she keeps shoving at him.

CLAIRE

Please? Oh, please, please,
please?

SILAS

I'm sorry, but no.

CLAIRE

Please?

SILAS

The frequency of your solicitations
is not the determining factor, miss
Gauthier.

She prods him with the record. Silas backs farther against the wall.

SILAS (CONT'D)

Nor is their ferocity ... It would
be disrespectful.

CLAIRE

Obviously, a subject with which you
have practice. Oh, go on, please,
be *gentlemanly*.

SILAS

I'm very sorry miss. My job does
not extend to this sort of cruelty.

Claire raises her voice.

CLAIRE

Cruelty! It would be cruel if we
had to spend the rest of the week
here in silence because of one
crusty old man's concept of
respect.

SILAS

(wincing)

I very much doubt silence will be a problem.

CLAIRE

You mean once everyone's lost their temper?

SILAS

Yes. And their manners.

JACK strolls in with a concerned look.

JACK

What's with all the shouting?

He frowns at Silas, stands by Claire.

JACK (CONT'D)

Everything ok, babe?

SILAS

Mister Fitzpatrick, your *sister* has been petitioning me to provide entertainment this morning. I trust you have been enjoying the show so far? Have no fear, she was just assuring me that it is about to get much more exciting.

JACK

She's not my sister. Anyway, it's just an expression.

SILAS

Of course.

CLAIRE

One our dour host has obviously never had a chance to use.

COLIN, liveried, follows Jack in with a putting club.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

One might even call him expressionless.

Claire and Jack snicker at Silas.

COLIN

The item you requested, Mr. Fitzpatrick.

CLAIRE

You see, *monsieur*, we each have our own ways of dealing with stressful situations.

Jack winks at her.

JACK

It's par for the course.

CLAIRE

(mimicking Silas)
Of course.

They laugh together. Silas glares.

JACK

Hey, don't get mad. It's just an expression.

More laughter. Colin waits impatiently behind.

SILAS

Flaunt death while you can. When you get as old as I am, you will learn that it is no laughing matter.

JACK

Yeah, like in a hundred years.

CLAIRE

Now hobble along and fetch me a record player, or perhaps I should ask Colin, since he's obviously the better servant.

Silas shakes with outrage. He takes the record, turns on his heel, and marches past Claire out of the room. Colin interrupts their chuckling.

COLIN

I'm sorry Ms. Gauthier, but I have another errand to attend to. If you are finished with my services, Mr. Fitzpatrick?

JACK

Just get me some damn breakfast already. I could eat a whole pig.

Colin hands Jack the golf club and exits tersely.

INT. KITCHEN CORRIDOR - DAY

Copper pipes run along the ceiling and over a series of swinging doors along the hallway. From beyond the doors pours steam and the crackle of things in frying pans. Colin slips through into the:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

At least five different meals are in various stages of completion on one of the numerous countertops, stovetops, or ovens in the kitchen. Bunches of flowers in vases await distribution.

BYRON, aproned, hunches over a cutting board and carves bitterly at a turnip with a paring knife. When he hears the doors swing shut he whirls around.

BYRON

Boo!

Then he sees Colin. His face becomes very red and he clears his throat uncomfortably.

BYRON (CONT'D)

You fink! The least you could do is announce your sorry self before walking in on a man like that!

COLIN

I'm sorry.

BYRON

Like I said, now shut up.

COLIN

Yes sir.

Byron waits.

BYRON

After you've said your business.

COLIN

Ms. Cheng would like to remind you that she can't eat eggs.

BYRON

(outraged)
Eggs aren't meat!

Colin shrugs.

COLIN

Oh, and one more thing. Mr. Fitzpatrick would also like a small, vegetarian meal this morning.

BYRON

For Christ's sake!

COLIN

Yes, sir.

Just then, PERRY JR. bursts through one of the doors wearing a cloth around his head like a bandanna.

PERRY JR.

Boo!

Byron's mood changes completely. He acts surprised, cackles, and then begins to chase Perry Jr. around the kitchen, the knife still in his hand.

BYRON

You hard-boiled little rascal.

Perry Jr. squeals with delight.

BYRON (CONT'D)

I know what you need!

Byron plucks a hard-boiled egg out of a basket with his knife, then sets the knife down.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Eh? Eh? Come here, you.

He gives the egg to Perry Jr. who stands at his side and nibbles at it.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Now what did you do with Mona?
Mona!

He calls her a couple more times and then turns around and jumps.

MONA is standing in one of the doorways. Her PARAKEET languidly shifts its weight on her shoulder.

BYRON (CONT'D)

For Christ's sake! Mona, I'm going to need more flour and potatoes. Bring some up from the cellar.

(to Perry Jr.)

(MORE)

BYRON (CONT'D)
 Go on, you little beast, breakfast
 will be ready soon.

Perry Jr. leaves contentedly with his egg.

Byron turns to Colin but Colin is gone and so is the paring
 knife.

BYRON (CONT'D)
 (mutters)
 Oh, for Christ's sake. You can't
 just borrow a man's tools.

INT. GREAT HALL - DAY

Groups of houseguests are spread out on the ample furniture:
 RUBIN and SEAN chat by the fire, Warren sits on the corner of
 a couch and TIFFANY sits next to him a little too close for
 politeness.

Jack putts a mandarin orange into an overturned glass on the
 carpet.

SEAN AND RUBIN:

Sean wears shorts and a misplaced Hawaiian shirt. Rubin is
 overdressed for breakfast.

SEAN
 So you're not angry at him, not
 even a little?

RUBIN
 No. He was my father. I have
 always known there was great blood
 in my veins.

He gazes upon the mantelpiece, a gold relief of some great
 battle, and at other riches in the room.

RUBIN (CONT'D)
 I could not have endured what I
 have if I did not. I could not
 have come this far.

Sean looks at the same things that Rubin does, but with
 distaste.

SEAN
 But... rape?

RUBIN

It happened so often in those days there wasn't even a word for it in my village. There was a whole generation of us without fathers.

SEAN

You can't tell me your people just accepted it?

RUBIN

Of course not. I was an outcast, a lonely man. I have never been loved by a brother. It gives me no joy to say that everything I have, I have because of me.

Sean shakes his head, amazed.

SEAN

That kind of strength is the strongest. It comes from here.

He puts his hand on Rubin's chest.

WARREN AND TIFFANY:

Warren pours himself a cup of coffee from a pitcher on the coffee table in front of the couch. Also scattered on the table is a kettle, some half-finished teacups, and biscuits, untouched.

TIFFANY

Isn't it tragic?

WARREN

Did you know her very well?

TIFFANY

Not really.

Tiffany's eyes follow his cup to his mouth then roam down his body to his crotch, and then up again to the corner of a badge peeking out of his pocket.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

Do you think it was murder?

WARREN

What makes you think that?

TIFFANY

Me?

She laughs.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)
You're a policeman, aren't you?

He gives her a considering look.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)
I can tell by your commanding
effect on me.

WARREN
... Not exactly. Detective.
Besides, I don't think there's
anything to worry about.

TIFFANY
Well, detective. I wouldn't mind
being investigated for a while.

Warren chuckles and shakes his head.

WARREN
Hopefully it won't have to come to
that.

From the other side of the room, Rubin coughs noisily.
Everyone turns and stares at him.

He holds up one of the biscuits with a sheepish grin.

Claire breaks the silence as she stomps in, fuming.

CLAIRE
Why is nothing ever where it should
be? That butler's absconded with
my record and I can't find my
handkerchief. Have any of you seen
a doily about so large? I swear I
left it in that room over there
less than an hour ago.

She points from where she came.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
It's very important to me. My
husband gave it to me.

Jack hits his mandarin wrong and it sails off-screen and
breaks some glass.

Everyone looks vaguely uncomfortable.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Yes, well... if you should see it.

She leaves quickly. Jack trots after her.

Rubin smirks.

RUBIN

"Honest Iago hath ta'en order
for't."

Awkward silence.

TIFFANY

I had better get someone to clean
up that mess.

Tiffany rises and leaves.

SEAN

Breakfast certainly is taking its
time, isn't it? Do either of you
have a watch?

Rubin fishes around in his pocket but comes up empty-handed.

RUBIN

That's funny, I must have left it
in my room. Gentlemen, it seems to
be a good day for missing articles.
Excuse me.

Rubin gets up.

INT. UPPER HALLWAY - DAY

Rubin hums to himself as he mounts the stairs and proceeds
along the hallway to his room on one side. A MYSTERIOUS
FIGURE at the dark end of the hall ducks out of sight.

INT. RUBIN'S ROOM - DAY

Rubin rummages in his luggage and among the drawers in his
dresser and closet.

He looks up in a perplexed moment and notices that one in a
series of wooden masks he has hung up on the wall is missing.

INT. UPPER HALLWAY - DAY

The mysterious figure, which has made some progress creeping
down the hall, ducks out of the way again as Rubin exits his
room and returns down the stairs hastily.

The figure emerges once more but jumps back when it hears:

RUBIN (O.S.)
Where are you going?

The figure pokes its head out.

WARREN (O.S.)
To see a servant about these damn phones.

RUBIN (O.S.)
Well ... let me know if you find someone. I think there is a thief in this house.

WARREN (O.S.)
Now, let's not get carried away.

RUBIN (O.S.)
Just keep an eye out.

Warren appears, walks down the hallway, and disappears around a corner.

The figure comes out of hiding and creeps into the light - it's Colin. He's holding something behind his back.

TIFFANY (O.S.)
You there!

Colin freezes. Tiffany comes up the stairs and marches up to him.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)
Where have you been? There's a dreadful mess in the hall and someone's going to hurt themselves unless it's cleared immediately.

COLIN
Uh, of course, Ms. Cheng. I'll be there momentarily.

TIFFANY
Not momentarily. Now!

COLIN
I have ... I'm on another errand.

Sean walks up the stairs.

SEAN

Hey! You guys done with breakfast yet? We're going crazy down there.

Warren emerges from the other end of the hall. Colin presses himself against the wall to hide whatever's behind his back.

WARREN

Ah, Colin. Good. When can we expect the phones to be reconnected? I can't get a signal from mine.

Jack mounts the stairs and shouts over the din.

JACK

Have any of you guys seen Claire?

Colin is overwhelmed. He clears his throat. They all fall silent.

COLIN

(beat)
Breakfast is served.

EXCLAMATIONS OF: Oh!, Finally!, Thank goodness!, About time!

TIFFANY

I had better dress!

They all depart in a group down the stairs.

Colin takes a deep breath and then sets his face.

He walks to one of the hallway doors and knocks, slowly, loudly.

INT. LONNI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Knock, knock, knock. LONNI groans, stirs from her bed.

She opens the door. It's Colin.

COLIN

Miss Taylor, rise and shine.

He pulls what he was hiding from behind his back: it's a bunch of flowers from the decorations in the kitchen.

LONNI

Oh!

Colin kisses her, awkward at first.

COLIN
Breakfast will be ready, er ...
soon ... but I thought you might
like to have breakfast in bed.
With me.

She smiles at him.

COLIN (CONT'D)
I can bring it up if you like.

They move to kiss again.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Byron grumbles to himself over some hash browns in a skillet.

Silas rushes furiously into the room.

SILAS
Our guests are in the dining room
demanding breakfast. They claim
Colin told them it was already
served.

BYRON
What?

Silas points at the hash browns.

SILAS
I sure hope that's almost finished.
I believe the saying is, "it's
going to get ugly in there."

BYRON
We're going to have to find more
work for that boy to keep him busy.

SILAS
You're a very generous man. Now,
what can I do to speed things
along?

Suddenly, a shrill SCREAM tears out from somewhere in house.

Byron and Silas look at each other gravely.

BYRON
Deal with it. I'll be right there.

INT. LONNI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Colin is slipping on his shoes hurriedly. Lonni looks terrified. The flowers lie discarded on the floor.

LONNI
Not again...

Colin throws on his coat.

COLIN
Come on!

They run out.

INT. ANOTHER UPPER HALLWAY - DAY

The guests and house staff (all of them except Perry) block the way. Colin and Lonni push through and see Tiffany, red-faced and teary but clearly all right, sitting against the wall in the middle of the crowd.

Silas, stern-faced, holds a squirming Perry Jr - replete in bandanna - in one of his hands, and Rubin's glowering African mask in the other.

CLAIRE
My handkerchief!

Claire unties the boy's bandanna and laughs.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
You naughty boy.

Rubin takes the mask from Silas gratefully.

COLIN
What happened?

TIFFANY
(sobbing)
I just came upstairs to change and the little devil jumped out at me with that *thing* on and shouted boo! Little shit.

Silas conceals a smile.

SILAS
A dreadful thing for him to say, miss Cheng. I trust you will teach him a thing or two about proper methods of address.

TIFFANY

I'll teach him all right. Leave me alone with him for just five minutes.

JACK

I don't want to know.

TIFFANY

Shut up, you creep.

SILAS

Perhaps your... ah, Perry's son would be best forgiven in light of his difficult situation. Traumatic experiences may often cause one to-
(he looks at Claire)
react inappropriately during periods of stress and anxiety.

RUBIN

The boy didn't hurt anyone, miss, that's what matters.

Tiffany glares at them, especially Warren, who does nothing.

TIFFANY

Well, since nobody seems to care that he nearly gave me a heart attack, forget it.

She gets up and brushes herself off self-consciously and wipes her eyes. Then she shoots Perry Jr. a hateful look and walks pridefully down the hallway.

Claire giggles to herself and it spreads until they are each either smiling to themselves or out and out laughing.

SILAS

Excuse me, gentlemen and ladies, but since *someone* seems to have informed you that breakfast has already been prepared - if you will kindly make your way to the dining room your servants will be able to complete the necessary arrangements for your meal.

The guests move off in a pack.

Byron pats Perry Jr. on the head.

BYRON

You get a lily liver when you eat
plants. That's your lesson, kid.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

INT. DINING HALL - DAY

All of the guests except for Perry sit in the tall, stiff chairs around the dining room table. In front of each of them is a single hard-boiled egg in an egg cup, except for Jack and Tiffany, who have small potatoes instead. Tiffany has changed her dress.

The servants, Silas and Colin, hover over the table like expectant gargoyles.

None of them quite know how to begin eating, though it's clear they want to.

Jack stares at his potato with a mix of hopelessness and fury.

Claire rolls her eyes then glances away when they meet Jack's.

Rubin looks around the room for guidance.

Lonni pouts at Colin.

Warren sizes up his egg with squinty eyes.

Tiffany has changed dresses, but continues to sob a little.

Eventually Sean shrugs and begins to saw at his egg with a butter knife, but stops when he catches Silas glaring at him.

Perry Jr's egg is already gone, somehow. The boy grins ear to ear.

Just outside there is a GONG and then Colin and Silas leave. They return momentarily with Mona, pushing three huge trays laden with covered entrees, steaming plates of muffins, polenta, sliced ham, bowls overflowing with fruit and yoghurt, custards, bagels, pitchers of juice and milk, frittata, marinated kidneys, and more.

The guests OOH and AAH at the display.

Byron follows the procession in and clears his throat as the servants load the table.

BYRON

I'm supposed to give a speech but I
can't be assed.

(MORE)

BYRON (CONT'D)

I can give you all a bit of advice,
though, something I've learned over
the years: Most of us don't
deserve what we're given.

He gestures at the banquet. The guests wait for more but he
turns and walks out the door. There are chuckles.

RUBIN

Hear, hear!

He toasts to the empty doorway with a glass of orange juice.
The table springs to life as the guests tuck in and the mood
lightens.

SEAN

(with his mouth half full
of carrot)

Well on that note, miss Gauthier,
I'm sure you noticed how shocked...
uh... we all were to discover that
some lucky man had won your heart.
I'm sure there's an excellent story
there.

Claire grabs some grapes.

CLAIRE

Not really. Ex-husbands make for
such boring conversation. The fact
that I loved him, now that is
interesting.

JACK

So he left you?

Jack keeps reaching for the ham platter, which has been
placed at the other end of the table from him with the rest
of the meat.

CLAIRE

Yes. He wasn't man enough.

Jack grins.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

How about you, mister Urbanowski,
do you have a wife?

Sean pours himself a glass of milk.

SEAN

No. I'm gay.

Rubin chokes on a piece of his meal. Everyone turns and stares at him. He holds up a scone sheepishly.

JACK
You're a homo?

SEAN
Queer is another one.

JACK
I didn't mean homo.

SEAN
You meant homosexual. Homo is a kind of milk.

He drinks.

CLAIRE
Now, Sean, no one's calling you a *homosexual*.

Sean puts his arm over Warren, who's sitting next to him with a pile of pancakes.

SEAN
No?

Warren looks at him curiously. Tiffany giggles.

Sean removes his arm to grab a fritter.

SEAN (CONT'D)
How about you, Rubin?

RUBIN
(slightly uncomfortable)
Like I said earlier, I have been alone all my life. I have no wife.

TIFFANY
Yeah, I don't think that was his question.

Laughs. Lonni is having trouble cutting a pineapple. Colin helps her.

LONNI
Um, do you think someone should maybe bring something up for the man whose wife passed away last night? Bringing breakfast up is such a nice gesture.

She smiles at Colin.

RUBIN

(relieved at the change of
subject)

That's a very considerate thought,
young lady. We must think of the
poor man.

WARREN

Has he been up in his room all this
time?

SEAN

Well, we should give him some
space.

By now, Claire's plate is heaping with delicacies.

CLAIRE

And food. Jack, maybe you could
bring him something after breakfast
and apologize for last night. It
might make things easier for him.

JACK

Whatever you say, doll.

He's finally got a piece of ham but it falls off his fork
onto the floor. Silas carries it away gravely.

TIFFANY

And return that nasty child of his.
I don't want him in my sight.

They look at Perry Jr's spot. He's disappeared.

JACK

What the...?

SEAN

Be careful what you wish for,
apparently.

Rubin toasts them with a fruit drink and curly-straw.

RUBIN

I hope you've all locked your
rooms. That mask he surprised you
with, miss Cheng, was looted from
mine along with, I have reason to
believe, a very distinguished
pocket watch.

(MORE)

RUBIN (CONT'D)

I've been meaning to speak to his father about getting them returned, but...

INT. DINING HALL/UNDER TABLE - DAY

Perry Jr faces a gauntlet of legs under the dining room table: Rubin's and Sean's, then Lonni's and Warren's, then Claire's and Jack's, then a couple of empty spots and then Tiffany's. He holds the egg from the table in his hand. The guests' voices continue from above.

TIFFANY (ABOVE)

You should have known better. I always lock my doors. You never know when a man might break into your house.

JACK (ABOVE)

I bet you always know when a man breaks into your house.

RUBIN (ABOVE)

In my culture, it is considered a sign of friendship to let others enter your home whenever they please.

TIFFANY (ABOVE)

Jack, if you can't be cultured like the rest of us maybe you should go play with the Wyss brat.

JACK (ABOVE)

Not if he's in your room.

SEAN (ABOVE)

I think locking all your doors is probably an overreaction.

TIFFANY (ABOVE)

I'd better go check just in case. Yoo-hoo, servant, will you escort me? I don't feel safe in this house anymore.

SILAS (ABOVE)

As you instruct, miss Cheng.

Tiffany gets up and her legs move out of view. Perry Jr sees his chance and begins to crawl to the other end of the table. He bumps into one of Rubin's legs.

INT. DINING HALL - DAY

Rubin looks up at Sean, across from him, alarmed.

Silas and Tiffany are no longer in the room. Colin stands at attention.

CLAIRE

Personally I think it's an
overreaction, I mean some of us -

She indicates Lonni.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

- weren't that age all that long
ago and can remember what it was
like to be controlled and preened
by an overcaring parent.

LONNI

I'm not a little girl.

Warren, across from her, starts and looks at her peculiarly.

LONNI (CONT'D)

I can take care of myself.

CLAIRE

Then do, you've spilled some of
your juice.

RUBIN

You seem to be saying that giving
children room to grow is uncaring.

Jack yawns.

CLAIRE

Nonsense. I said overcaring. I am
personally glad that my father
cared for me as little as he did.

SEAN

You don't hear that every day.

WARREN

Do you mean the man that raised you
or Mr. Ash?

Perry Jr pokes his head out from under the table between
Claire and Lonni. Colin stares down at him.

The boy retreats and Colin, after a blink, returns to
refilling glasses and removing plates.

CLAIRE

Both, I guess. They were both businessmen and businessmen know how to handle their assets.

JACK

I'm a businessman.

SEAN

Shut up, Jack.

Jack bangs his hand on the table and makes some glasses jump.

JACK

Fuck you. I don't think someone like you has the right to talk about kids.

Sean stands up.

SEAN

What is that supposed to mean?

Jack rises.

CLAIRE

Sit down, Jack.

He does.

WARREN

Calm down, fellas.

Sean, huge and threatening, takes a deep breath and returns to his seat.

RUBIN

Let's be civilized.

There is general agreement, grudging or otherwise.

WARREN

The one thing we all have in common is that we're all bastards, of a sort, so fatherhood seems as good a topic as any.

JACK

Now that's sense. Where are you from anyway?

WARREN

Seattle; not too far.

JACK
 (to Claire)
 Hey, hey, another American! No
 wonder he makes sense.

WARREN
 And you?

JACK
 Kansas. Pretty far. Got to run
 wide to lose the feds.

WARREN
 Oh?

Tiffany returns to the hall with Silas. She has once again
 changed her dress.

JACK
 Only because the country's gone to
 hell.

Tiffany sits down in her place, makes a face, and then jumps
 up again. She turns around to look at her seat and there's
 hard-boiled egg all over her butt. She gives a little shriek
 and dives under the table. A moment later she's got Perry Jr
 by the hair.

TIFFANY
 You snot! You brat! You mistake!

She hits him and his nose starts to bleed.

Before anyone can do anything, PERRY SR walks into the room.
 He's dishevelled at best.

PERRY
 You get away from him!

He pushes Tiffany to the ground and picks up his boy. Jr's
 crying and now so is Tiffany. He glares at the assembly.

PERRY (CONT'D)
 I consider you all responsible.
 First my wife, and now you try to
 hurt my little boy.

JACK
 Wait a second, mister -

He's trembling now with anger.

PERRY

I've raised my boy to be gentle,
respectful, humble despite his
lineage. If any of you ruin him
... If any of you ruin him

Perry begins to break down and cry like his son.

PERRY (CONT'D)

... poisoned!

The breakfasters glance at each other.

PERRY (CONT'D)

You poisoned her! God damn you
all, you poisoned her!

RUBIN

You think we.... one of us... I
would never condone...

Perry begins to shriek:

PERRY

Stay away from my boy!

He drags Jr out of the room.

The guests stare at each other, frightened and disgusted.
Lonni pushes away her food.

RUBIN

The man needs a doctor. Is anyone
here a doctor?

SEAN

Yeah, he just left.

INT. GREAT HALL - DAY

An ashen-faced Silas hands Claire her record.

A phonograph has been set up in the middle of the hall. The
other guests, Tiffany, Warren, Lonni, Rubin, Sean, and Jack,
sit bleakly among the furniture.

Claire puts on the record. Scratch, scratch. Then:

A MELLOW, JAZZY TUNE echoes out. A sad little piano; a
sleepy drum; a saxophone. It washes over the guests, from

Tiffany, her makeup streaked and her dress still dirty, to
Sean, who glances nervously from Rubin to the floor, to

Rubin, staring hard at an elegant statue of a conquistador
from one of the coffee tables, to

Warren, watching Jack carefully, to

Jack, watching Claire adoringly, to

Lonni, rubbing her temples and biting her nails, to

Silas, crouched at the bar, to

Claire, who as the music picks up begins to sing:

CLAIRE

Ah! Sweet Mystery of life at last
I've found thee /

Ah! I know at last the secret of it
all /

Ah the longing, seeking, striving,
waiting, yearning /

The burning hopes the joy and idle
tears that fall /

Rubin begins to tap his feet.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

I've a very strange feeling I ne'er
felt below /

Tis a kind of a grind of depression

Lonni smiles and shakes her head.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

My heart's acting strangely; /

It feels rather sore /

Tiffany nods.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

At least it gives me that
impression /

My pulse is leaping madly without
any cause /

Believe me I'm telling you truly. /

I'm gay without pause /

Sean laughs.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Then sad without cause. /

My spirits are truly unruly. /

Jack smirks.

As the music plays on, we

CUT TO:

INT. DINING HALL - DAY

The singing is quieter here, but still audible.

Colin clears dishes.

Byron dips a finger in one of his half-eaten creations and sucks on it. He grins.

Mona stands in the doorway. Her parakeet perches on the table with its head cocked to one side and listens.

CUT TO:

INT. LOWER HALLWAY - DAY

The singing is even quieter here. It's also darker.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRWAY - DAY

The singing is a distant buzz. Even darker.

CUT TO:

INT. UPPER HALLWAY - DAY

The door to Perry's room. It's hard to see it's so dark. No sound.

Perry Jr. approaches the door and unwraps an object that glints despite the ambient darkness. It's the paring knife that disappeared from the kitchen.

He opens the door - only blackness beyond - and enters.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT 2

ACT 3

INT. PERRY'S ROOM - DAY

Perry has taped up the windows. There's a little light near a dim lamp on his desk, however. Here he sits, bespectacled, and reads from a pair of medical manuals filled with diagrams of molecules.

There is a BODY in the bed.

PERRY JR.

Father?

It takes a moment for Perry to snap out of it. He turns to his son and holds a finger to his mouth, then points to Dorothy's crib.

PERRY

(whispering)

Did you do it?

PERRY JR.

Yes, father.

Perry Jr. presents his father with the paring knife.

PERRY

You are such a brave young man. A smart young man. My PJ.

He takes the knife and kneels in front of his son, adjusts his clothes, smooths his hair.

PERRY JR.

It wasn't that hard.

PERRY

Do you remember what the China bird said?

PERRY JR.

"When we all work together what was hard becomes simple."

PERRY

That's right. And when there are less of us around that becomes even more important.

PERRY JR.

(sad)

Yes, father.

PERRY

Now you have to go. Your father needs to do some work. Alone.

PERRY JR.

But I don't want to go.

PERRY

You have to go.

PERRY JR.

... We should work together.

This stops Perry for a moment.

PERRY

We are; we are.

INT. UPPER HALLWAY - DAY

Jack, holding a tray of food, leans an ear against Perry's door. The door opens and Jack steps back.

Perry Jr comes out and closes the door behind him. He stares accusingly up at Jack.

JACK

Oh uh. I just came by to apologize to your dad and noticed the door was ... uneven.

PERRY JR.

Father wants to be alone right now.

JACK

Of course he does. Uh. I brought him some breakfast, in case he's hungry. You can have some if you want.

Jack squats so Perry Jr can see the tray. The boy walks up to it, right next to Jack, and examines it.

PERRY JR.

Go away.

JACK

Ok. Sure, kid. I'll just leave the food right here. But don't tell him I didn't try.

Jack gets up and saunters down the hallway.

JACK (CONT'D)

Christ.

Perry Jr watches him leave then moves off in the opposite direction.

INT. PANTRY CELLAR - DAY

Frost collects between cracks and grooves in the stone parquee of the cellar. The ceiling is low, and from it in irregular intervals hang bare bulbs like irons. Arches thick with mortar open onto a neighboring wine cellar.

The room is heaped with gunny sacks and barrels, some of them badly gnawed-at. Tall cabinets line the walls.

At the end of the room, in a corner, are TWO PLANK COFFINS. They each have plaques. The first reads, "Silas Ambrosier: 1928-(blank). Loyal to the end."

Perry lifts the lid and climbs in. It closes with a BANG that echoes widely.

INT. COFFIN - DAY

Pitch black. Shuffling. Flip! - Perry Jr has a little flash light.

The inside of the coffin is scattered with KNICKKNACKS: a golf ball, Rubin's pocket watch, lipstick, a telephone directory, a book titled "Murder is Easy," a yo-yo, and more.

He fishes in his pocket and removes something else: a wallet. Perry Jr opens it - it's Jack's, with his driver's license, maybe a couple hundred American dollars in cash, lots of credit cards, some serious gambling citations, etc. There's also a PICTURE of a smiling woman on a beach in a bathing suit. He stares at it, transfixed.

From somewhere outside the coffin, there is SHUFFLING. Perry Jr pockets the photograph, flips off the light, and waits. It is pitch black.

The shuffling gets closer. There is some RUSTLING of the nearby sacks and a CREAK as one of the cabinet doors very close is opened.

Perry Jr lifts up the coffin lid just a crack and peers out.

Mona's parakeet is perched on a barrel less than four feet away. It stares right at him. It SQUAWKS.

PARAKEET

Hello!

Perry Jr lowers the coffin lid. There is MORE SHUFFLING.

He raises the lid again. The bird is still there, rocking back and forth, agitated.

Mona rummages in a nearby cabinet. She pulls out a CONTAINER labeled "Rat Poison" and then closes the cabinet.

She picks up the parakeet and then crosses to the entryway.

The parakeet flaps its wings and SQUAWKS.

PARAKEET (CONT'D)

Good night!

When she's gone, Perry Jr climbs out of the coffin again.

He tries the closet, but it's locked.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Byron is leaning back in a chair, snoozing, with a cookbook drooping out of his hands.

Perry Jr stalks in.

PERRY JR.

Boo!

Byron's eyes fly open and he stares at Perry Jr in terror. He clutches his heart.

BYRON

For Christ's sake!

He raises his hand to hit Perry Jr, but frowns and stops.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Did you do it?

Perry Jr giggles and hands him Jack's wallet.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Well done, my boy!

Byron kneels in front of Perry Jr and ruffles his hair and upsets his clothes.

BYRON (CONT'D)

That'll teach those nasty vegetarians, eh?

Byron removes the cash and the cards with glee.

BYRON (CONT'D)
Ha, ha, ha! If you ever kill me,
kid, I want you to have my recipes.

He gives back the wallet.

Perry Jr puts his hands on his hips.

PERRY JR.
(imitating Byron)
For Christ's sake!

Byron laughs and slaps his knee.

BYRON
Go hide it somewhere, or something.

Perry Jr grins and leaves.

INT. PANTRY CELLAR - DAY

Perry Jr slinks into the room and stops.

Jack is rummaging in a barrel. He brings up a bottle of liquor and then closes the barrel.

Perry Jr slinks back out, unnoticed.

INT. UPPER HALLWAY - DAY

Perry Jr tries of a few of the guests' doors. Locked. Locked. Locked. One of them opens. The boy peers in to:

INT. SEAN'S ROOM - DAY

Unoccupied. Perry Jr enters; he looks for a place to put the wallet and finally settles on the bedside table.

He turns to leave but is distracted by a MEDAL hanging from a peg by the vanity mirror. He takes it down, admires it, then puts it in his pocket.

Then, he hears FOOTSTEPS outside. He looks around frantically, then dives under the bed. He peers up as:

Sean walks in, slick from a shower and wearing a towel.

He opens a drawer and removes a bag of cocaine and paraphernalia. He sets about dividing it up on his vanity, glancing up admiringly every once in a while at his face.

He snorts a line.

There are FOOTSTEPS outside.

RUBIN (OUTSIDE)
Sean, I think we should talk. I've
been thinking.

Rubin opens the door and enters, oblivious.

RUBIN (CONT'D)
All that business about inner
strength...

He stops and stares at Sean. Sean stares back, furious.

RUBIN (CONT'D)
Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean
... In my culture, we just ...

SEAN
(flat)
I could have been king of the
world. And now I can.

RUBIN
Uh. I had better leave you to ...

SEAN
If you tell anyone about this, I'll
kill you.

Rubin's eyes widen. His nostrils flare.

RUBIN
In my culture, we take threats very
seriously.

Sean stands up. Rubin's big, but Sean is bigger. He grabs
Rubin by the shoulders and KISSES him. Rubin struggles a
little.

At last Sean releases him. Rubin, mortified, stumbles back
against the door and out of the room.

Sean closes the door. He sits down at his vanity and puts
his head in his hands.

There is a KNOCK at the door.

Sean hurriedly clears away the cocaine and answers it.

It's Jack. He's clearly a little intoxicated himself.

JACK
Hi. Uh. I'm sorry for calling you
a fag earlier.

Sean shakes his head.

JACK (CONT'D)
I've just had a bad run of luck,
you know? Sure you can understand.
Everyone has bad luck. I mean,
once in a while.

He pushes past Sean and slumps down on his bed.

JACK (CONT'D)
(drawling on)
Especially Fitzpatrick's. Lost my
job, my home, my wife, my dog, low
on cash, bad credit, I'm a wanted
man. I gambled it all away, you
know.

He spies the wallet on the table.

JACK (CONT'D)
What do you know. You and I got
the same wallet.

He frowns and thinks for a minute. He checks his trousers
then stares from Sean to the wallet and back again.

He grabs the wallet and starts poring through it, his face
getting redder every second.

JACK (CONT'D)
And no wonder, when you got friends
like I got friends. You son of a
bitch! Where is she?

He shoves the wallet in Sean's face.

SEAN
What? What the fuck is your
problem? Get out of my room.

JACK
Oh, I will. But I'll be back. And
when that happens you better be
ready to run for your fucking life.

Jack storms out.

INT. RUBIN'S ROOM - DAY

Rubin's hand shakes as he opens a decorative chest in his
room and removes a heavy knobkerrie.

He catches himself in the mirror and looks away.

INT. GREAT HALL - DAY

Claire chats with Warren and Tiffany in yet another new dress. Claire and Tiffany laugh. Lonni walks in, followed shortly after by Colin.

Tiffany waves to Lonni.

TIFFANY

Yoo-hoo. Come sit here, darling.

She pats the seat next to her and Lonni sits down. Colin watches her from the sidelines.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

(to Lonni)

Everyone's worried about you, hon. It's not right for a girl your age to be so... withdrawn. You ok?

LONNI

Oh. Yes, thanks for asking. The death of that woman has me shaken up, that's all.

WARREN

That's nothing to be ashamed of. I'm surprised more of us aren't a little low.

CLAIRE

What matters is that we make the best of it.

TIFFANY

(to Lonni)

You ever seen somebody... you know?

LONNI

My mother died last month.

TIFFANY

Oh. God, I'm sorry. That's terrible.

LONNI

Thank you. It's very kind of you to say so.

CLAIRE

Everybody's mother has got to die some time. You should be glad she died now when you're young and left you time to become your own person.

WARREN
Hey, give her some space.

TIFFANY
How did it happen?

LONNI
Cancer. It's just ... the coughing
and the blood. That woman, she
reminded me so much of how my
mother died in the end.

Tiffany hugs her.

TIFFANY
You poor dear.

Lonni removes Tiffany's arms.

LONNI
Thank you. But I'm alright.

WARREN
Let's just ... give her some space.

TIFFANY
(to Warren)
You got something on your mind,
handsome?

WARREN
I'm just taking it all in. That's
all.

She winks at him.

TIFFANY
Hey, that's my job.

They continue chatting as Silas walks in from one of the
servant doors. He plucks Colin on the shoulder.

SILAS
Would you please see Byron about
this afternoon's arrangements?

Colin leaves.

Warren flags Silas down from his chair.

WARREN
Have you made any progress on the
phones yet? I've got to ...
(MORE)

WARREN (CONT'D)
my mother isn't in very good
health, and it's really important I
talk to her.

SILAS
You will of course be the first to
be notified when the necessary
repairs are complete.

WARREN
Maybe I can have a look. I'm no
electrician, but I've got
desperation on my side.

SILAS
That is, of course, your
prerogative. I will take you to
the junction box.

Warren stands up.

Perry walks into the room and takes a deep breath. Everyone
stops what they're doing and stares at him warily.

Perry glances nervously between them.

PERRY
I thought you should know that I'm
sorry for yelling like that
earlier. It has you know been a
stressful time for me and my
family, which - I suppose - now
includes you. I do not wish you
any harm, but you can understand my
suspicions. I ... suspect ... that
someone poisoned my wife. Someone
who might have had something
against her, and might have
something against my children.

He's really trying not to look at Tiffany.

PERRY (CONT'D)
But I have no proof. I intend to
find some, however, in a scientific
and methodical manner. Until then,
I would hope we could all work
together to make this time easier
on each other.

He gives them a weak smile and returns the way he came. The
room takes a collective breath.

INT. ELECTRICAL CLOSET - DAY

A long, thin room with dun electrical boxes along the walls, racks of fuses, tons of cabling and naked wires, and a steady hum. At the end of the room a sooty, monolithic chamber is squeezed between two ancient compartments with chimneys for generating coal power.

Silas and Warren step carefully over detritus on the floor until they come to a junction box.

SILAS

Here we are, mister Fields.

Warren crouches to inspect the phone lines running in gnarled coils along the floor and into sockets in the wall.

He purses his lips and opens the junction box. The insides have been hacked to pieces and then charred beyond recognition.

Warren looks at Silas. Silas returns the stare uncomprehendingly.

INT. OUTSIDE ELECTRICAL CLOSET - DAY

Warren and Silas leave the room and Silas locks it behind him.

WARREN

Well that's that, I guess.

SILAS

Indeed, mister Fields.

WARREN

But who would want to sabotage the phones?

SILAS

Sabotage?

WARREN

You don't think those circuits just blew up on their own, do you?

SILAS

I know very little about such things.

WARREN

What, were you expecting someone to just show up at the door in the middle of winter, hundreds of miles away from civilization, and ask if you needed your phones fixed? Come on, man!

SILAS

Obviously not. We have had to send away for a repairman by good old-fashioned mail but, as you have observed, winters here are very cold, and sometimes even our brave national post bends to their mercies. Who knows how long they may take?

WARREN

And in the mean time?

SILAS

Ah, I was hoping young Colin, who has some experience in these matters, might be able to exercise his abilities. However, he has of late been somewhat derelict of his duties.

WARREN

Huh.

SILAS

Will that be all?

WARREN

Yes, I hope so.

Silas wanders away.

INT. DARK HALLWAY - DAY

Warren strolls alone down the corridor, deep in thought.

He turns a corner and sees Mona standing in front of an open closet, stock still. Stuffed in the closet:

The mangled corpse of Sean Urbanowski, eyes wide open.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT 3

ACT 4

INT. GREAT HALL - DAY

The remaining guests are assembled: Perry, Tiffany, Jack, Rubin, Warren, Lonni, and Claire. (Not Perry Jr.)

All the house staff are present: Mona with Parakeet, Byron, Colin, and Silas.

LONNI

I just can't believe it. Why would someone kill Sean? He was so sweet.

Tiffany looks askance at Jack.

TIFFANY

Greed.

Perry glares at Tiffany.

PERRY

Scorned love.

Rubin looks anxious at that.

RUBIN

... It could have been anything.

CLAIRE

I think we should spend a moment in silence.

PERRY

No, what we need to do is talk. I knew there was a murderer in this house; it's just a question of who.

RUBIN

There's still no *evidence* to suggest that your wife was murdered, mister Wyss.

Perry looks at him coldly.

PERRY

Of course.

JACK

Well I think it's obvious who committed the crime.

(to Warren)

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

You discovered the old maid over Sean's body.

Warren shakes his head.

WARREN

Mister Wyss says that our killer broke two of Sean's ribs, his leg, and the back of his skull with a blunt object. Not just anyone could have done that. I would say that even under the best of circumstances, those conditions exclude the older servants and probably Claire, Lonni, and Tiffany as well.

CLAIRE

That doesn't do us much good. The three of us were here when it happened.

WARREN

We don't know exactly when Sean was killed. As far as I know, the last time anyone saw Sean was at breakfast. Am I mistaken?

No one says anything.

WARREN (CONT'D)

Ok. Well, we're going to have to take that for granted for now, even though one of us in this room is responsible, unless we learn of a break-in. We should see if Sean is missing anything from his room, just in case it was a burglar.

JACK

Why are you in charge? You could be the murderer.

TIFFANY

He's a detective, stupid.

Jack becomes very tense.

WARREN

(shrugging)
Someone has to.

Rubin raises his hand.

WARREN (CONT'D)

Um... yes?

RUBIN

I would like to add that Sean was a drug addict. It is possible that whoever killed Sean may not have had to defeat him on gentlemanly terms. Miss Gauthier could probably have done the deed with the right weapon.

Claire scoffs.

CLAIRE

What weapon would that be?

Rubin begins to answer, but doesn't.

WARREN

I would say that Claire probably has the best alibi of any of us since she was down here in the hall most of the day.

JACK

Claire's an angel. She couldn't kill a man.

CLAIRE

Could too.

WARREN

Please. We could speculate about this sort of thing all day. As far as we know, Sean was a stranger to all of us before he arrived, so all we have to go on is alibi, which isn't much, frankly. Because the exact time of Sean's death is not known, most of us could have killed him at some point, provided, as you say mister Ndaji, the circumstances were right.

PERRY

My money's on Tiffers. She destroys what she can't have.

WARREN

Quiet. I'd like you all to let me handle this methodically. It's possible that whoever killed Sean may have motive to kill again.

This causes some furor.

WARREN (CONT'D)

We need to know what each of you, including the staff, was doing after the entertainment in the hall this morning for the hour or so until I discovered the body. Let's start with you, Tiffany.

DUMB SHOW FOLLOWS:

INT. GREAT HALL - DAY

Tiffany sits in a chair across from Warren on the couch and poses, trying to catch his attention. Warren chats with Lonni and Claire.

TIFFANY (V.O.)

I was down here the whole time, except once I went up to my room to change my dress.

Warren gives Tiffany a friendly smile but isn't distracted. Tiffany pouts.

She examines her dress and then gets up.

JACK (V.O.)

Didn't you just change your dress?

TIFFANY (V.O.)

The old one wasn't doing it's job.

WARREN (V.O.)

Did anyone see you?

TIFFANY (V.O.)

(giggling)

What, change my dress?

WARREN (V.O.)

Did anyone see you enter your room?

INT. UPPER HALLWAY - DAY

Tiffany sees Perry peek out of his door as she enters her room.

TIFFANY (V.O.)

No. No one.

PERRY (V.O.)

I did.

TIFFANY (V.O.)
Like I said.

WARREN (V.O.)
(sighs)
Did you see her leave?

PERRY (V.O.)
(defensive)
I haven't been spying on her, you know.

Perry again watches Tiffany leave her room in her new dress.

WARREN (V.O.)
What were you doing upstairs?

INT. PERRY'S ROOM - DAY

Perry holds the paring knife. He squints at it in the dim light.

PERRY (V.O.)
I was mourning my wife, of course.

Perry turns to the bed. His wife's cadaver has been arranged, naked, on top of the sheets. He refers to a medical manual on the bedside table.

Then he bends over and begins to cut.

WARREN (V.O.)
Fine. Jack?

INT. JACK'S ROOM - DAY

Jack, furious, looks behind his sofa, under his bed.

JACK (V.O.)
I lost my golf club and was trying to find it.

WARREN (V.O.)
Where?

JACK (V.O.)
In my room.

WARREN (V.O.)
And you didn't look anywhere else?

JACK (V.O.)
Don't be an idiot. Of course I did. I found it in the hallway.
(MORE)

JACK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 One of you guys must have killed
 Urbanowski with it and left it
 there.

WARREN (V.O.)
 What did you do then?

JACK (V.O.)
 I practiced my putting, of course.

Jack hefts the club and begins marching to Sean's room.

WARREN (V.O.)
 How about you, Rubin? We haven't
 seen you around, lately.

INT. ANOTHER UPPER HALLWAY - DAY

Rubin walks wide-eyed down the hallway with his knobkerrie.
 He turns the corner next to Sean's room and comes face to
 face with Jack and his club. Surprised, they both spring
 back and raise their weapons.

RUBIN (V.O.)
 I was with Jack. Putting.

JACK (V.O.)
 That's right, he was.

WARREN (V.O.)
 With another golf club?

RUBIN (V.O.)
 No, uh. With my foot.

Sean's door opens and they both swing around to face it.
 Perry Jr stands in the doorway, horrified.

WARREN (V.O.)
 ...ok. Well, as long as there was
 a witness. I'd like to discount
 the possibility that there was a
 conspiracy for now. It doesn't
 make sense that two randomly
 introduced people would so quickly
 become partners in crime. Let's
 move on to the staff. Mister
 Ambrosier?

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Silas folds sheets and rearranges stray clothes and baggage.
 Mona creeps up slowly behind him, her parakeet hanging back
 on one of the dressers.

SILAS (V.O.)

I don't know what you expect of me. Mona and I were tending to the exciting matter of housekeeping, somewhat more undermanned than usual, I should add.

PARAKEET (V.O.)

SQUAWK! Come to daddy!

WARREN (V.O.)

Ahem. Yes, that will do. I don't think anyone here expects that you could have killed Sean like that anyway. Same with you, mister Leeds, what you were doing?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Pots are bubbling. Byron rushes about.

BYRON (V.O.)

What do you think I was doing? Slaving away in the kitchen with the goddamn servant boy to prepare tea for ungrateful guests, which, I might add, is currently rotting in the drawing room. I wish the murderer had told me there would be one less mouth to feed, but no, life is hard. Not that I'm complaining. No one else but me could have prepared that meal in an hour, even with Colin around to screw things up.

Colin walks in and inadvertently knocks over a bubbling pot of couscous that flies all over the floor.

WARREN (V.O.)

Ah yes. Colin.

BYRON (V.O.)

Much help he's been lately.

WARREN (V.O.)

No, he hasn't, has he? Colin Morris. Where were you prior to your brief time in the Great Hall and your subsequent employment by the cook?

DUMB SHOW ENDS.

INT. GREAT HALL - DAY

Colin looks uncomfortable. Everyone looks at him.

COLIN
I was.... I was....

Warren folds his arms. Jack grins.

LONNI
He was with me.

Tiffany raises her eyebrows. The other guests mumble to each other.

Colin blushes and looks at the floor.

SILAS
(haughty)
Well that explains that.

Warren frowns.

WARREN
Yes... they did come down together.

TIFFANY
So... who killed Sean?

WARREN
Simply put, I don't know yet.

Tiffany looks disappointed.

WARREN (CONT'D)
Whoever did it must have had an excellent plan.

JACK
Well that's just great.

WARREN
The only thing we can do at this point is wait and hope that some additional evidence turns up, perhaps by searching Urbanowski's room.

CLAIRE
What, and just hope that one of us isn't next?

WARREN

I won't let that happen. We're all
going to get through this week
alive. I promise.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT 4

END OF EPISODE