



Sample Pages from Ashland Falls

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ASHLAND FALLS

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS BY
Steven Stack



Ashland Falls

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Casting

11W 3M

Act 1

CARRIE: Well-liked, dating Aidan. Plays Ashley.

AIDAN: Often the leading man. Dating Carrie but there are rumors about him and Savannah. Plays Dalton.

SAVANNAH: Tends to get leading roles. Rather full of herself. Has interest in Aidan. Plays Kaelyn.

HEATHER: Carrie's best friend. Makes constant jokes, typically at Savannah's expense. Plays Leah.

GAVIN: Reliable actor and person. Likes Alyssa but is unable to talk when she's around. Plays Wynter.

ALYSSA: Most mature of the group. Has held the show together. Plays Liza.

MORGAN: A very hard worker but tends to stress out when she feels she isn't measuring up. Plays Nara.

TONY: Decent actor but would rather goof off. Plays Garrick.

AVA: Believes she is a better actor than she is. Considers herself a "method actor." Plays Eleanor.

EMILY: Freshman. Friends with Payton and Lydia. Plays Elizabeth.

PAYTON: Freshman. The not-so-bright friend of Lydia and Emily. Plays Tawnie.

LYDIA: Freshman. Best friends with Emily and Payton. Rather clumsy. Plays Vala.

LAURA: The new director, who is from a small town in England. She replaced Mr. Beasley after he mysteriously disappeared.

ASHLEY (ghost): The ghost of Ashley Donovan.

Act 2

LEAH: Older sister of Ashley and Vala, seeking revenge for Ashley's death.

ASHLEY: (as played by Carrie) Was hoping to marry Dalton until she died under mysterious circumstances.

KAELYN: Daughter of Nara Worthington, Ashley's friend, secretly in love with Dalton.

NARA: The very rich and snobbish mother of Kaelyn.

GARRICK: Loyal butler of the Worthingtons.

DALTON: Was planning to propose to Ashley but never had the chance. Is now going to marry Kaelyn.

WYNTER: Dalton's friend, who is not supportive of Dalton's desire to marry Ashley. Has feelings for Liza.

VALA: Youngest sister of Leah and Ashley. Works as a maid for Nara. Developed a stuttering problem after Ashley's death.

LIZA: Friend of Leah, Wynter, and Dalton. Rumored to practice witchcraft.

ELIZABETH: Friend of Kaelyn and Elizabeth, who overestimates her own importance.

TAWNIE: Friend of Kaelyn and Elizabeth, who appears dim-witted.

ELEANOR: Mother of Leah, Ashley, and Vala. Currently in an asylum.

Production History

Ashland Falls was first performed on July 10th, 2013 at the Overture Center in Madison, WI. The cast was as follows:

Heather/Leah: Michala Tierney

Savannah/Kaelyn: Carolyn Walters

Carrie/Ashley: Anna Cohen

Morgan/Nara: Katherine Larson

Tony/Garrick: Max Luke

Gavin/Wynter: Eric Mattson

Aidan/Dalton: Erik Oliver

Alyssa/Liza: Tia Vasen

Ava/Eleanor: Selin Gök

Emily/Elizabeth: Naomi Hays

Lydia/Vala: Camille Hall

Laura: Audrey Head

Ashley's Ghost: Katie Effertz

Director: Steven Stack

Assistant Director: Ilana Habib

Production Notes

Set

The set is the same for both acts. That being said, the set could be less established in the first act since it is a rehearsal. There are three main set areas.

Worthington Parlor: Can be as simple or as elaborate as you wish. The time period is the mid-1800s.

Kaelyn's Room: A simple chair is all that is needed to create this space.

Outdoor Scenes: You can choose to have no set pieces at all, or you may wish to add some outdoor foliage depending on your needs and space.

Note: If space is limited, you may choose to cut the scene that occurs at the end of Act II, Scene I in which we see Ashley and the masked figure. It does add to the overall effect but does not take away from the story if left out.

Property List

Act I

Stuffed Bird: Heather

Knife: Heather

Spell: Heather

Clipboard and Script: Laura

Brush: Savannah

Makeup Box: Heather

Serving Glasses: Worthington Parlor

Serving Tray with Sandwiches: Lydia

Cell Phones: Savannah, Lydia, Payton, Emily

Ring: Laura

Spell: Laura

Book Bag: Carrie

Scripts: All at various times

Act II

Stuffed Bird: Leah

Knife: Leah

Spell: Leah

Brush: Kaelyn

Gloves: Nara

Letter: Ashley

Necklace: Leah

Glasses: Worthington Parlor

Serving Tray with Sandwiches: Vala

Lights

Only basic lighting is needed in general. There are times where various parts of the stage will need to be lit while others are in blackout. When Ashley is close at the end of Act I and throughout Act II, there should be flickering lights to announce her presence. In terms of her murders, the lights should black out as she is about to kill someone and come back on after the body has fallen.

Sound

No sound cues are needed unless you want to add ambiance in the outdoor scenes.

Costume Notes

The first act takes place in modern times during a rehearsal, so the actors should dress as typical high school students, with some thought being placed on their personalities.

Act II takes place in 1860s England and should reflect that time. The character of Ashley Donovan, played by Carrie, should have a similar dress as the ghost Ashley Donovan. Both dresses should be worn and show signs of massive distress. With that in mind, the dress in Act II, Scene I should be a new and clean version of the same dress.

ACT I

Setting: Herbert Hoover High School Theatre. Two days before opening night.

At Rise: Students enter from both sides. HEATHER crosses upstage right. CARRIE sits in a chair downstage right. AIDAN and GAVIN cross downstage left, while TONY and MORGAN move to upstage center.

HEATHER: Adoni, Helumnay, Peenay,
Adoni, Helumnay, Peenay,
Thy gods command thee
Oh mapulamun,
Adoni, Helumany, Peenay, (*draws knife up over her head*)
Come forward blessed sister,
Know your calling
Come forward oh blessed sister.
Vengeance you shall seek
On all responsible. (*stabs into the box and then stops suddenly and pulls out a stuffed bird*)
Wait. Who put this stupid stuffed bird in here? (*she throws it on the stage*) And where's my real one?

MORGAN: (*looks up at her*) Why would you have a real bird, Heather?

HEATHER: Because it's a real spell, Morgan.

GAVIN: So you were going to kill a real bird?

HEATHER: (*mocking*) What would be the purpose of killing one that's already dead, Gavin?

AIDAN: Why would it matter? This is theatre.

HEATHER: And? (*AIDAN shrugs*) So, where is it? Who took it?

We hear a scream from offstage and then we see SAVANNAH run in. Others look in from offstage. LAURA, the director, steps up from the audience.

LAURA: What's wrong, Savannah?

SAVANNAH: A bird flew out of my makeup box! Right into my face.

Everyone responds.

HEATHER: Ah, that's where I left it. (*SAVANNAH looks up at HEATHER*)
Sorry.

SAVANNAH: It could have killed me.

HEATHER: Highly doubtful. Doves are peaceful creatures.

SAVANNAH: What is wrong with you?

HEATHER: Nothing. I put breathing holes in it. The makeup box. Not the bird.

SAVANNAH: You... get it out of there.

TONY: It's still in your makeup box?

SAVANNAH: No, it's flying around the dressing room. (*turns back to HEATHER*) Go get it.

HEATHER: Can't. I happen to be acting right now.

SAVANNAH: Well, somebody needs to.

MORGAN: Why didn't you just leave the door open?

SAVANNAH: (*stares at MORGAN*) Somebody needs to go get that bird. Now.

AIDAN: No worries, Savannah. I'll go get it.

HEATHER: Just put it back in the cage, if you can. Or back in Savannah's makeup box.

SAVANNAH: (*crosses over to AIDAN and touches his chest*) Oh, thank you, Aidan. You're so brave.

TONY: I agree, but I'm not going to rub your chest. Unless you really want me too.

AIDAN: (*sees CARRIE watching this and backs away*) I don't and it's only a dove.

TONY: You don't know how many people have said that very same thing and died.

AIDAN: Do you?

TONY: No.

AIDAN: (*Crosses to CARRIE. Laughing.*) Do you want to help with this dangerous bird hunt?

CARRIE: I'd be delighted.

SAVANNAH: (*hears this and crosses to CARRIE and AIDAN*) No, Carrie, you need to stay here. I really want to run our scene (*looks out*) if possible, Ms...

LAURA: I told you, you can call me Laura. Based on Mr. Beasley's notes before he left, your scene is one of the better ones, and this rehearsal is—

SAVANNAH: It would really make me feel better if we ran it.

LAURA: Well...

HEATHER: Just so you know, Laura, none of that has anything to do with why she wants to run the scene. She has this thing for—

SAVANNAH: Shut up, Heather.

HEATHER: Rude. I can see why you have such a problem keeping friends.

SAVANNAH: I don't have a—

HEATHER: I'm trying to help you, Savannah.

SAVANNAH: You can help me by shutting your mouth.

HEATHER: That hurts. I thought you valued my opinion.

HEATHER and SAVANNAH continue arguing until LAURA interrupts.

LAURA: Ladies? (*HEATHER and SAVANNAH continue*) Ladies! (*HEATHER and SAVANNAH instantly stop and turn to LAURA*)

HEATHER: (*innocently*) Yes.

SAVANNAH: (*to LAURA*) If Mr. Beasley were here, she wouldn't be acting like this.

LAURA: Well, he's not. He quit and I'm here now.

CARRIE: (*to LAURA*) Speaking of Mr. Beasley, do you know where he went? I mean, he quit teaching too. Didn't even say goodbye.

MORGAN: And no one's even seen him or heard from him since.

AIDAN: It's like he just disappeared.

TONY: A little creepy, if you ask me.

LAURA: I'm sure it's nothing.

AIDAN: But do you know what happened to him?

LAURA: No. I haven't been here that long, and I'm not included in the teacher gossip in the lounge yet.

TONY: How did you get this job anyway?

LAURA: I was moving to the States and looking for work when I saw that the school needed a director on short notice, so I jumped at it. This is the world premiere of a play based on a story that I know pretty well. Actually really well.

MORGAN: Are you from the town where this took place?

LAURA: Close.

AIDAN: And people still talk about it? Even though it happened like a 100 years ago?

LAURA: *(smiles)* Closer to 150 and yes. It's almost to legend status at this point. Now, can we get back to running the show? *(everyone starts moving to places except for TONY, who looks out at LAURA)*

TONY: I think we should. And I want you to know that I think you're doing a fantastic job of directing.

LAURA: Is that sarcasm?

TONY: Sarcasm? I'm not familiar with that term.

CARRIE: *(turns to SAVANNAH)* I'm fine running the scene if... *(turns to LAURA)* if we have time.

LAURA: Sure, why not? *(turns to TONY)* Tony, go and help Aidan get the bird.

TONY: No, no, no. Not gonna do it. Terrified of birds. All kinds.

AIDAN: It's a bird, Tony.

TONY: And since I'm terrified of birds, I am certainly not going to participate in the capture of one.

LAURA: You're kidding, right?

CARRIE: No, he's not. On our 6th grade field trip, he was chased by a bunch of sparrows and he's been scared ever since.

TONY: I have.

AIDAN: Look, I can go by myself. It's cool.

LAURA: Okay. *(AIDAN smiles at CARRIE and exits)* Let's get back to rehearsal then.

HEATHER: Quick question.

LAURA: Or not. Yes, Heather?

HEATHER: It's okay that I'm using a real bird, right?

LAURA: No, it's not okay.

HEATHER: Why?

LAURA: Because we're not going to kill a bird. As Aidan said earlier, it's theatre.

HEATHER: But since she's a real ghost, we need a real spell.

LAURA: Hate to tell you, that spell you're using isn't even the real one.

HEATHER: Wait... what? You mean to tell me, that this (*holds up a piece of paper*) is nothing but some crappy made-up—

LAURA: Tell you what. If you settle for sacrificing the stuffed bird, I'll give you the real spell and you can use it in the play. Deal?

HEATHER: Is it the one Leah really used?

LAURA: (*smiles*) Maybe.

HEATHER: I'm in.

MORGAN: That's a terrible idea. What if it works?

HEATHER: It can't. Stuffed bird, remember?

MORGAN: But what if it does? I don't want her coming back.

LAURA: Who?

ALYSSA, who has been waiting backstage, pokes her head out. GAVIN tenses up and looks away from her.

ALYSSA: Morgan's scared that a real spell would actually bring back the ghost of Ashley Donovan.

MORGAN: Because it would, Alyssa. Think about everything that's happened so far. We get a play mailed to us out of nowhere without a name on it that wants us to be the first ones to perform it. Us. Who would pick us for a world premiere? Of anything? We're terrible. Then we find out it really happened. I know it was like 100 (*looks at LAURA*) or 150 years ago but still. A couple of days after that, we arrive to rehearse and have a brand new set which Mr. Beasley had no idea where it came from. Oh, and of course, Beasley drops off the face of the Earth then

(to LAURA) you arrive out of nowhere. Oh wait, not nowhere, from near the place where the murders happened. Little suspicious. (to LAURA) No offense. So yeah, I'm scared. Too many coincidences. Not to mention that you should never mess with the supernatural. Especially when it involves a vengeful spirit.

CARRIE: People do plays about this stuff all the time.

MORGAN: Not like this, Carrie. This is different.

SAVANNAH: Stop freaking out, Morgan. The ghost stuff didn't even really happen, did it, Laura?

LAURA: Maybe. Maybe not. I'm sure the playwright, whoever she or he is, took some dramatic licenses to spice up the story.

ALYSSA: (to MORGAN) See Morgan, the ghost stuff was made up.

LAURA: I didn't say that. Whether the ghost "stuff" is made up depends on if you believe in ghosts or not.

MORGAN: That's not making me feel better.

LAURA: I'm sorry, Morgan. But guys, we don't really have time for this anyway.

TONY: That's right, we don't. (looks out to LAURA and gives a thumbs up) Besides, ghosts don't exist. It's just humanity's lame attempt to have something after death.

HEATHER: I've seen ghosts, Tony.

TONY: That's because you're a freak.

LAURA: Guys? (they continue talking) Guys! (they stop) The show is in two days and we have a paying audience. Not to mention, your final grades are based on this performance.

HEATHER: Want me to start again?

LAURA: (looks at her watch) No, we'll skip the rest of your scene. Your part looked okay.

HEATHER: That's what I shoot for. (air quotes) "Okay."

ALYSSA: Clearly.

HEATHER: (smiles) I'll go help Aidan capture the bird.

ALYSSA: I'll go too.

HEATHER and ALYSSA exit.

LAURA: You do that. And since Carrie and Savannah want to run their scene... *(flipping through her script)* let's just skip to them. *(sees GAVIN)* Gavin, right? *(GAVIN nods)* You don't have to stay there. You can—

GAVIN: No. I need to work my freeze. I tend to—

TONY: Start shaking when he's supposed to be frozen because he's trying so hard not to move. *(imitates him mockingly)*

GAVIN: *(turns to TONY)* It's true, I do. Just like that.

LAURA: Work on your freeze then, I guess. Carrie and Savannah... you ready? *(they have moved to places and nod)* Okay, lights up.

CARRIE/ASHLEY is sitting down while SAVANNAH/KAELYN stands behind her brushing her hair.

CARRIE: Do you believe it to be so, Kaelyn?

SAVANNAH: Oh, I'm most sure of it, Ashley. Wynter told me that he's talked about it non-stop.

CARRIE: Oh, I do hope it's true. I've dreamt of Dalton proposing to me for so long. How do you suppose he'll do it?

SAVANNAH: Dalton is a hopeless romantic, so one would imagine it will be magical. *(SAVANNAH/KAELYN walks off slightly)* And the two of you will no doubt live a very joyous life together. *(Her voice has changed. Almost angry.)*

CARRIE: What troubles you, Kaelyn?

SAVANNAH: Nothing. It's just... I often wonder when I will find... my Dalton.

CARRIE: *(crossing to SAVANNAH/KAELYN)* It will happen. I'm sure of it.

SAVANNAH: If only I could believe that. *(silence, then turns back to CARRIE/ASHLEY)* But tonight isn't about me. It's about you and the wonderful thing that's going to happen to you. You and Dalton will be forever happy.

CARRIE: *(turns away)* I believe that for me, but for Dalton... *(doesn't finish the thought)*

SAVANNAH: What?

CARRIE: He told me yesterday that his father had threatened to take his position away and remove him from his will if he marries me.

SAVANNAH: You're more important than money to Dalton.

CARRIE: But he still thought to tell me. It's as if he wanted me to know the sacrifice he was making. (*silence*) Perhaps his father's right. Perhaps I will only bring shame to his family name. I told him I would understand if he wanted to be with someone else. (*turns to SAVANNAH/KAELYN*) Someone like you.

SAVANNAH: No.

CARRIE: You're beautiful, and your family is far superior to mine. I've often told Dalton that perhaps you two were meant to be together.

SAVANNAH: What did he say when you said that?

CARRIE: He said it was I who he loved and nothing else mattered.

SAVANNAH: Just like Aidan to turn a blind eye to... (*CARRIE/ASHLEY looks at her, causing SAVANNAH/KAELYN to stop*) I meant... I meant Dalton.

TONY: Freudian slip much? (*SAVANNAH, CARRIE, MORGAN, and LAURA all turn to him*) Wow, you all looked at me at the same time. Not you, Gavin. You stayed frozen. Nailed it, buddy.

SAVANNAH: (*continues*) It is you and Dalton who were meant to be together. And tonight, at Ashland Falls, he shall make it official.

CARRIE: Ashland Falls. It's where we first kissed. And in a way, it's also the place where my life began.

SAVANNAH: And where it will end. (*CARRIE/ASHLEY turns to her*) Your life alone, that is.

CARRIE: You're being quite odd tonight, Kaelyn. As if there's something you're not telling me. Is there? Do you know something?

SAVANNAH: What would there be to know?

CARRIE: I don't know, but when our talk turned to Dalton, something about you changed.

SAVANNAH: You're anxious and imagining things. Now hurry along. It's almost dusk. And remember, Dalton wanted you to get there first. There's something he wanted you to see.

CARRIE: (*smiles*) What do you suppose—

SAVANNAH: I haven't a clue, but I imagine it's wonderful. Now hurry. I've had Garrick bring the carriage around for you.

CARRIE: (*turns to leave and then turns back*) What would I—

HEATHER and ALYSSA enter, carrying SAVANNAH's makeup box. AIDAN follows a little later.

HEATHER: Hey, got the bird. Right here.

SAVANNAH: You put the bird back in my makeup box?

AIDAN: We had no other place to put it. Couldn't find the cage.

HEATHER: Yeah, see? *(She acts like she is going to open it and SAVANNAH and TONY jump. HEATHER laughs.)*

CARRIE: We're right in the middle of our scene, Heather.

HEATHER: Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't want to interrupt, but... I really wanted to do that. *(to LAURA)* By the way, I realized I don't want this bird anymore. I mean, if I can't sacrifice it then I don't have much use for it. *(turns to SAVANNAH)* Unless you want it.

SAVANNAH: *(turns to LAURA)* Can we be done? I need a break and I want to go over my next scene.

LAURA: That's fine. Heather, go put the bird and makeup box in my office. I'll take care of it before I leave tonight.

SAVANNAH: *(turns to AIDAN)* Aidan, will you help me go over my lines?

AIDAN: Can't. I go on after Morgan and Tony.

SAVANNAH: Oh. I really wish that you could.

AIDAN: Well, I have to rehearse this. This is the only scene that Gavin has a chance to not be awful in.

GAVIN: *(doesn't look over)* That is true.

CARRIE: I can help you, Savannah. I don't have anything for a while.

SAVANNAH: Oh, right. Because you have a smallish part this time. And sure. I'll let you help me.

CARRIE: *(turns to AIDAN)* Break a leg. *(smiles)*

AIDAN: Will do. Hey, after rehearsal do you want to get something to eat?

CARRIE: Sure.

SAVANNAH stares at them. HEATHER walks beside her.

HEATHER: Isn't it weird when a boyfriend and girlfriend act like... boyfriend and girlfriend?

SAVANNAH: *(starts to say something but then turns to CARRIE)* Are you coming, Carrie?

CARRIE: Yeah.

CARRIE turns to AIDAN and he smiles back. CARRIE exits with SAVANNAH, leaving HEATHER standing there.

LAURA: So, let's move on... *(notices HEATHER)* Heather, what are you doing?

HEATHER: Standing here. For no apparent reason.

Silence as LAURA stares at her. ALYSSA turns to HEATHER.

ALYSSA: So why don't you drop the bird off in Laura's office like she asked and then do your trig assignment for the first time all year? Surprise Ms. Mertz. *(HEATHER looks at ALYSSA)* Could give her a heart attack.

HEATHER: Sounds like a plan. *(to ALYSSA)* You know I won't know how to do it, right?

ALYSSA: Are you saying you want my help?

HEATHER: Just pretend we're in class and I'm copying off your paper like always.

ALYSSA: Wait, what?

HEATHER: C'mon. *(ALYSSA shakes her head and starts to exit with HEATHER, who looks back)* Give us a shout when you need us.

LAURA: Will do. *(HEATHER exits)* Now, Aidan, get into place as we run the Garrick and Nara scene.

AIDAN moves besides GAVIN as TONY raises his hand.

TONY: Miss Director, I have a quick question.

LAURA: Yes, Tony?

TONY: Why do all the characters sound like they're from the 1800?

LAURA: Because they are from "the 1800," like I said earlier.

TONY: Oh. *(turns to MORGAN)* So they're kind of like you, Morgan. Glad you got cast as Nara.

MORGAN: What does that even mean, Tony?

TONY: You know, after hearing it out loud, I don't know. It was way more clever in my head.

LAURA: Suppose you should have left it there then. Now to the scene. *(LAURA looks at her notes)* Okay, Tony and Morgan, from notes Mr. Beasley took earlier on, I see that he only said "What the hell?" over and over again about this scene. Do you know what he meant by that?

MORGAN: I don't.

TONY: No idea.

LAURA: I guess we'll find out then. Go when you're ready. *(MORGAN is looking out the window as TONY stands beside her. MORGAN fixes her dress but doesn't say anything.)* Could you be ready to go... now, Morgan?

MORGAN: *(Looks out at her and takes a deep breath. As NARA without the accent. Now looking out the window.)* It's almost dusk. Soon it will be done, Garrick.

TONY: Yes, ma'am.

MORGAN: Is everything as I required?

TONY: It is. I have provided a carriage for Ms. Ashley. She should be departing soon.

MORGAN: And—

LAURA: *(from offstage, interrupts)* Wait, I don't hear your accent, Morgan.

TONY: That's a good thing.

LAURA: No, this is an English ghost story. The characters are British.

MORGAN: They don't have to be. What... what... if the mom was American. Southern, even. *(begins her dialogue again in a southern accent)* It's almost dusk. Soon it will be done, Garrick. *(looks out at LAURA)* Will that work?

LAURA: No. You're British. Now, do it again with a British accent.

LAURA turns her back and TONY leans into MORGAN.

TONY: It's fine. Your accent is amazing.

MORGAN: I don't need your help.

TONY smiles and MORGAN looks even more stressed.

MORGAN: *(In a horrible accent. Now looking out the window.)* It's almost dusk. Soon it will be done, Garrick.

TONY: Yes, ma'am.

MORGAN: Is everything as I required?

TONY: *(trying to suppress laughter)* It is. I have provided a carriage for Ms. Ashley. She should be departing soon.

MORGAN: *(growing more stressed)* And mine?

TONY: *(starts to imitate her)* It is also taken care of. *(MORGAN hits him)*
Ow!

MORGAN: It's not funny, Tony.

LAURA: Morgan—

MORGAN: I can't do a British accent, Laura. I don't know why Beasley cast me in the role anyway.

LAURA: It doesn't matter why. All that matters is that you are Nara, and she needs to have a decent British accent. Did he ever work with you on it?

MORGAN: He didn't really work with us on anything.

LAURA: Okay. Let me see if I can help. British people tend to talk from the front of their mouth, so try pushing your sound there. When you did southern, *(in a southern accent)* you went back to the back and if you push it to the front and try to mimic the way I speak, you can do something that resembles British. Let's try it. Repeat after me... It's almost dusk.

MORGAN: *(sounds nothing like her)* It's almost dusk.

TONY: *(starts clapping)* That's amazing. *(turns to LAURA)* You fixed her instantly.

LAURA: *(to TONY)* Stop. *(to MORGAN)* Let's try again, Morgan.

MORGAN: No, I don't want to do it. I can't. Everybody else has a decent accent. Even Tony. And you're British. This is so embarrassing.

LAURA: It's okay. Tell you what, let's just run the scene again and you focus on pushing your sounds to the front of your mouth. No pressure. Okay?

MORGAN: Okay. (to TONY) And you don't say anything.

TONY: What about my lines? (MORGAN cuts him a look) Okay. Sorry.

TONY stands beside her as MORGAN goes back into place. She looks out the window. Note: Her accent is pretty bad at the beginning but as the scene continues, she gradually improves.

MORGAN: (as NARA) It's almost dusk. Soon it will be done, Garrick.

TONY: Yes ma'am.

MORGAN: Is everything as I required?

TONY: It is. I have provided a carriage for Ms. Ashley. She should be departing soon.

MORGAN: And mine?

TONY: It is also taken care of. As are the items at the Falls. Exactly as you wanted.

MORGAN: And no one—

TONY: (breaks character and looks out to LAURA) This plan seems way more complicated than it has to be.

LAURA: And?

TONY: I'm just saying. Did she (pointing to MORGAN) come up with it? Because she's supposed to be all smart and stuff and this plan... is highly questionable.

MORGAN: You think Garrick, the butler, would have come up with a better plan?

TONY: Absolutely. I think—

The scene is interrupted by CARRIE storming out on stage, closely followed by SAVANNAH and HEATHER.

SAVANNAH: Carrie, wait. I was kidding.

CARRIE: (turns) Really? (SAVANNAH nods) You think I'm stupid? (AIDAN crosses to them) Like I haven't seen the way you look at him? And then you make your little joke.

SAVANNAH: I said I was sorry.

AIDAN: What happened?

LAURA: Guys, can we just rehearse one scene without interruptions?

TONY: (to LAURA) Technically, we weren't rehearsing. (to SAVANNAH, CARRIE, and HEATHER) So continue.

CARRIE: (after realizing what she's done, turns to LAURA) I'm sorry.

SAVANNAH: It's my fault. It was a misunderstanding.

HEATHER: Yeah, Savannah misunderstands that she's not actually Aidan's girlfriend.

SAVANNAH: (turns to her) Mind your business, Heather.

HEATHER: She's my friend, so it is my business.

CARRIE: (to HEATHER) You're not making it any better.

HEATHER: Okay. I'll be quiet. For now.

HEATHER smiles at SAVANNAH, who throws her a mean look. GAVIN, who is still frozen, turns to LAURA.

GAVIN: Are we going to get back to the scene soon? Cause I can't hold this freeze much longer.

LAURA: You can relax, Gavin.

ALYSSA enters and crosses beside GAVIN. TONY notices this.

TONY: No, he can't.

ALYSSA: (to GAVIN) Have you been in a freeze the whole time?

GAVIN: (instantly tenses up at the sound of ALYSSA's voice) Oh... um... yes... um... yes.

ALYSSA: Seriously, Gavin. You have got to get over this.

GAVIN: Oh... I am. Over this. Cool I am.

ALYSSA: (starts laughing) You certainly are, Yoda.

LAURA: (stares at them) What's happening?

MORGAN: Gavin has a crush on Alyssa.

GAVIN: I... do.

ALYSSA: But I make him nervous. Any time I'm near him, he tenses up.
Like this. (*moves even closer to GAVIN, whose eyes grow wide*)

GAVIN: Oh. We're... touching shoulders now.

ALYSSA: (*smiles and moves away slightly*) He's even this way when we're playing our scenes together. That's why Mr. Beasley stopped running them. He couldn't take it.

GAVIN: I worked on them by myself. (*ALL laugh*)

AIDAN: They're not good, though. The only one he's good in is the one with me. Because he doesn't have a crush on me. That we know of.

GAVIN: (*matter of factly*) I don't.

LAURA: That doesn't bode well for us. You and Alyssa are in a lot of scenes together, Gavin. You have to stop this.

GAVIN: Can't. I've tried, believe me. Even hypnosis. Nothing works.

TONY: I know something that will work, Ms. Director. Alyssa needs to kiss Gavin. Right on the lips. In front of everybody.

The other students start to laugh and ALYSSA looks deep in thought. GAVIN, without looking at anyone, speaks up.

GAVIN: I'm fine with that.

ALYSSA: Okay. I'll do it.

Everyone stops and turns to ALYSSA, even GAVIN.

GAVIN: Wait, you will?

ALYSSA: Sure. If this is what it takes to make this work, I'll do it. I can't afford a bad grade. Besides, it's not like it's Tony.

ALYSSA smiles at TONY as the students chatter more. Then ALYSSA turns to GAVIN, grabs him, and kisses him. She pulls away and GAVIN looks stunned. Everyone is silent. To GAVIN.

ALYSSA: Well?

GAVIN: (*shocked*) I think you cured me.

ALYSSA: Great. Now that that's done with... (*to LAURA*) what scene are we doing?

LAURA: (*looking at notes*) We're about to run the Wynter, Dalton scene and then the big living room one. Is everyone here?

SAVANNAH: Emily, Tawnie, and Lydia are on their way.

LAURA: Why aren't they here? Rehearsal started an hour ago.

SAVANNAH: They're at the mall.

LAURA: The mall?

SAVANNAH: They said they wouldn't be that late.

LAURA: "That late" is already too late.

CARRIE: They've never been on time. Ever.

AIDAN: The only reason they got cast is because their parents paid for the theatre.

LAURA: What about Ava? Where is she?

AVA: (*enters from backstage*) Here I am. Do you need me? I was in the dressing room reviewing my character notes.

ALYSSA: Were you reviewing your lines too?

AVA: No. Only... my motivations.

ALYSSA: But you don't know your lines.

SAVANNAH: And you never have.

LAURA: (*turns to AVA*) Wait. You don't know your lines?

AVA: (*turns to LAURA, walks over to her, and extends her hand*) I don't think we've met.

LAURA: We met last week.

AVA: I don't think so. I would have noticed your almost charming British accent. A little more practice and it will be believable. Where is Mr. Beasley?

LAURA: He's gone. I'm directing the show now. Now, what's this about your lines?

AVA: If you mean the lines forced upon me by the playwright without any of my input... then I do not "know" them. I, however, create each performance organically based on my motivations and my lines flow from that. Speaking of which, (*turns to GAVIN*) Gavin, how's your motivation work coming?

Everyone looks at him. Then ALYSSA turns to him.

ALYSSA: Really?

GAVIN: Um...

LAURA: Doesn't matter. Ava, we'll need you in about five minutes and look at your lines. *(AVA starts to say something, but LAURA's look cuts her off)* And Savannah, could you call the girls and hurry them along?

SAVANNAH: Sure. *(casts a look at AIDAN, which CARRIE sees)*

LAURA: *(turns to CARRIE)* So you and Savannah are okay now?

CARRIE: Yeah, I'm just a little over-sensitive sometimes, I guess.

HEATHER: *(crosses to her)* I'll take care of her, Ms. Director. No worries.

LAURA: Somehow I don't find that soothing. You two be ready for your scene. *(HEATHER and CARRIE exit)* All right, Aidan and Gavin. Everyone else, clear the stage but stay close.

ALYSSA: *(looks at GAVIN and touches his shoulder and he doesn't flinch)* Break a leg, Gavin.

GAVIN: I will. *(ALYSSA takes a moment and then smiles. GAVIN smiles back as ALYSSA exits. GAVIN turns to AIDAN.)* Ready?

AIDAN: *(smiles)* I am. But I bet you wish we were working your scenes with Alyssa instead of this one.

GAVIN: Kind of.

LAURA: All right, you two. Go when you're ready.

GAVIN: *(about to start, then turns out to LAURA)* I might have a few questions. Ava's been helping me with some character things and I need to make sure I'm clear on it.

AIDAN: God. I told you not to talk to her.

LAURA: It's fine. I'll help where I can.

AIDAN and GAVIN take a moment, and then the scene begins.

GAVIN: I can't believe you're going to go through with this.

AIDAN: What reason would I have not to?

GAVIN: I can think of many.

AIDAN: (*turns to him*) Really?

GAVIN: Listen, I'm your friend and I've always had your best interests at heart.

AIDAN: When have you ever had my best interests at heart?

GAVIN: When it benefited me, of course. Like now. (*AIDAN/DALTON laughs*) Listen, Dalton, I know she's beautiful and also quite charming but her looks will fade, and probably her charm as well, and then you'll be left with nothing but a charmless, homely, penniless woman.

AIDAN: My looks will fade as well, and I already lack charm.

GAVIN: But you are not penniless. At least not yet. (*laughs and sits down*) Besides that, why tie yourself down to one woman when you can have them all? (*GAVIN looks out to LAURA*) Did my dad cheat on my mom?

LAURA: I don't know that much about you, Gavin.

GAVIN: No, not my dad. Wynter's dad. Do you think he messed around a lot?

LAURA: I don't know. Why?

GAVIN: Well, if he did, that might be why Wynter doesn't respect women. To be like his dad.

LAURA: Then yes.

GAVIN: Okay. That was simple. (*Turns back to AIDAN/DALTON. Then looks back out to LAURA.*) But it could've had the opposite effect too. Like if his dad did mess around, maybe he would be more protective of women, because clearly he would be a mama's boy. So which is it?

LAURA: Whichever gets you to keep going.

GAVIN: But I—

AIDAN: You know what... your mom cheated on your dad, left you guys, and now you don't respect women because you think they're going to abandon you.

GAVIN: (*stares at AIDAN, then looks out to LAURA*) That works. I'm ready.

LAURA: Good. Nice job, Aidan.

AIDAN: Thanks. (*gets back into character and turns to GAVIN/WYNTER*)
What you desire, Wynter, is not what I desire. You care for only three things in a woman: looks, money, and the fact that there should always be more than one.

GAVIN: What else is there? (*he laughs*) And money should have come first.

AIDAN: Of course.

GAVIN: (*takes a moment, looking at AIDAN/DALTON*) But in this case, there's something else.

AIDAN: What?

GAVIN: Listen, you always think with your heart and I've always been the one—

AIDAN: Without one?

GAVIN: (*takes a moment and looks at AIDAN/DALTON*) You're very witty tonight. And perhaps you're right, but I do know this. You don't just marry the girl. You marry her family, and in Ashley's case, they're an embarrassment. If you marry her, they will bring that embarrassment to your name. To your family name, and your father has been quite clear—

AIDAN: She's a wonderful girl, Wynter.

GAVIN: This is not about her, Dalton. (*breaks character and walks downstage to talk to LAURA*) See, I don't get that. It's obviously about her, but he says it's not. What gives?

LAURA: What he means by that is that if it were just Ashley... he'd be okay with it. But her family issues cause more trouble.

GAVIN: I don't get it.

AIDAN: Wynter's saying that Dalton can't marry her because her family is basically trash.

GAVIN: I get that, but I don't get why he would say it's not about her when it clearly is.

AIDAN: It's about her family at that point in the conversation.

GAVIN: But then it is about her.

LAURA: No, it's about her family.

GAVIN: But her family is her, and her is... her family.

AIDAN and LAURA look at him.

AIDAN: What?

GAVIN: Sorry, I got confused. So what's my motivation?

LAURA: Your only motivation is to prevent Dalton from marrying her.

GAVIN: Why? Why am I so anti-Ashley? What has she ever done to me? *(gets an idea)* Do I have a thing for Dalton? I mean, we are pretty close. *(looks AIDAN over)* And he's a good-looking guy, so... I guess I could play that, but—

LAURA: No, you don't have a thing for Dalton.

GAVIN: Then why am I so anti-Ashley?

AIDAN: Because that's the way the playwright wrote it.

GAVIN: But what the playwright wrote doesn't make any sense.

AIDAN: Maybe he was drunk when he wrote it.

GAVIN: You think?

LAURA: No. Listen. I don't normally do this, but we've been here a long time and we're on page three of the script, so... the reason that you are against Dalton marrying Ashley really has nothing to do with him, or her, or her family.

GAVIN: What?

LAURA: That's right. It's all about you, Wynter. You want to protect what you have. A friend to go out drinking and picking up women with so you can continue lying to yourself that you won't, at some point, be the lonely old guy at the bar.

GAVIN: Ouch. *(silence)* I think I understand now. *(takes a moment)* Should I improv some of my lines? Just to make it more clear.

LAURA: No.

GAVIN: But I could add some really—

LAURA: No.

GAVIN: Why not?

AIDAN: Because you suck at improv.

GAVIN: *(turns to AIDAN)* I wasn't asking you. *(to LAURA)* So why not?

LAURA: Two reasons. One, these are the playwright's words, whether you think they're clear enough or even well written. These are the words of the play and we will use them as is. And secondly, we open in two days and I'm not changing anything. Okay?

GAVIN: Got that. Should we just go? (LAURA nods. GAVIN and AIDAN get back into character.) This is not about her, Dalton. This is about what you will lose. And my god... her family? Her father's a criminal, her mother a beggar, Vala is a servant, and Leah... the things that are wrong with her. Though she is rather nice to look at.

AIDAN: What is your point?

GAVIN: How do you not see my point? You should be marrying someone else. Someone of better lineage.

AIDAN: Like whom? Kaelyn?

GAVIN: She is quite... ravishing. A bit of a... you know, but yes, someone like Kaelyn.

AIDAN: So it would please my father and keep me in the will?

GAVIN: There are worse things.

AIDAN: (crosses away) Wynter, I know your heart is in the right place, but I want to marry Ashley because I love her.

Lots of talking and laughing is heard. GAVIN and AIDAN stop and look offstage. LAURA steps closer to the stage.

LAURA: What now? Quiet backstage.

EMILY, PAYTON and LYDIA enter laughing and carrying bags from the mall. They all have coffee drinks and are on their phones.

Excuse me?

The girls look at LAURA, clearly not knowing who she is.

LYDIA: Oh, don't mind us. You can keep cleaning. (to EMILY) When did they get a new custodian?

GAVIN: She's not a custodian. She's the new director.

The girls take a moment and look at her.

LYDIA: I thought she would be older.

PAYTON: I thought she'd be smarter-looking. Like me.

EMILY: And less mannish. (to LAURA) No offense.

LAURA: You're late.

LYDIA: We're sorry, but there were so many big sales...

LAURA: (to PAYTON) Get off the phone.

PAYTON: (looks at her) I am making plans for tonight, so... there.
(moves back to the phone) Anyway, where were we? (LAURA walks up on stage and takes PAYTON's phone. Then takes LYDIA's and EMILY's as well.) Hey, what are you—

LAURA: No phones at rehearsal. You'll get them back when we're done.

PAYTON: I'm going to tell my mother.

LAURA: I don't care.

EMILY: We'll tell our mothers.

LAURA: You do that.

LYDIA: You wouldn't say that if—

ALYSSA: (enters again) It's after 4, ladies. Isn't that bar time for your moms anyway? (LYDIA starts to say something, but is cut off by ALYSSA) Don't. And you three... don't be late anymore. (looks at LAURA and smiles)

LAURA: Thank you. That's exactly what I would have said. Except about the bar. You're a natural director.

AIDAN: She's had plenty of practice. Mr. Beasley was hardly ever here and when he was, he was asleep in the back. So should we finish?

LAURA: No, your scene looks good. I think we move to the big living room scene.

ALYSSA: All right, guys, we are running scene four!

Movement starts to set up the living room. CARRIE comes on and AIDAN rushes over. They are seen talking and near the end of the set being done, they hug. SAVANNAH is watching, almost as if planning something. The set is done.

LAURA: Places for Scene four. We are going to start with Nara and Elizabeth entering after Wynter and Kaelyn have already talked. *(the actors move into place)* Morgan, just keep working on your dialect. *(MORGAN nods and there is some laughter but it stops when MORGAN looks at them)* And... lights up.

A parlor. SAVANNAH/KAELYN is facing GAVIN/ WYNTER angrily. MORGAN/NARA enters with EMILY/ELIZABETH and PAYTON/TAWNIE.

MORGAN: Interesting choice of topic for tonight. Perhaps you should choose another?

GAVIN/WYNTER and SAVANNAH/KAELYN look up and see them.

GAVIN: Indeed. Shall we talk of your beauty then, Ms. Worthington?

MORGAN: Flattery will get you nowhere, Wynter. Nor will your infantile humor. Though I'm sure your life has already proven that.

GAVIN: Delightful as always, Ms. Worthington.

MORGAN: *(looks at GAVIN/WYNTER a moment and then crosses over to SAVANNAH/KAELYN)* Tonight is to be a celebration of Dalton and my dear Kaelyn.

EMILY: Where is that handsome soon-to-be husband of yours?

PAYTON: He is quite delightful to look at.

SAVANNAH: *(smiling)* And quite taken. His father had him closing the office today. He shall be here shortly.

Lights black out and up on another part of the stage. We see AIDAN/DALTON enter hurriedly. He sees HEATHER/LEAH.

AIDAN: Leah? What are you doing here?

HEATHER: I was dropping off dinner for one of the Worthington's servants.

AIDAN: Stop lying.

HEATHER: Why does no one trust me? *(bitterly)* And oh, congratulations on your pending marriage.

AIDAN: *(takes a moment to look at her)* I want you to know that I loved your sister.

HEATHER: And I imagine she would love to know that you are marrying the woman who killed her.

AIDAN: That's not fair, Leah. Ashley—

HEATHER: Killed herself. And Kaelyn had nothing to with it and—

AIDAN: You read the—

HEATHER: The letter? Yes, I did. Has it never struck you as odd that you never knew those feelings existed in Ashley?

AIDAN: Ashley was not as open—

HEATHER: I know you would like to think that was true, but—

*HEATHER/LEAH freezes, looking over AIDAN/
DALTON's shoulder to see AVA/ELEANOR enter.*

AIDAN: What?

HEATHER: Mother? (*AIDAN/DALTON turns around*) How did you—

AIDAN: Ms. Brent. You shouldn't be here. Let me—

AVA: Do not touch me, Dalton. And you, (*turning to HEATHER/LEAH*) you vile excuse for a daughter. I would rather Medusa herself have come from my loins.

AIDAN and HEATHER stare at her and then play through.

AIDAN: (*to HEATHER/LEAH*) Did you have something to do with this?

HEATHER: No. We're not on—

AVA: (*to HEATHER/LEAH*) I was set free from a prison not of my own making and yet... I am still a prisoner. A prisoner of a prison that I have built brick by brick in my mind. Full of a tangle of webs and—

HEATHER: Seriously, could you say the right lines?

AVA: Lines? Life is full of lines. Played out on a stage.

AIDAN: No, the lines from the script. Of our show.

AVA: (*collapses to the ground*) This is only a show? How dare you? A show where my daughter, my dear dead Ashley, breathed her last on a cold November night. (*shakes back and forth*)

HEATHER: (*looks out to LAURA*) Can you make her stop, or I swear I'm going to sacrifice—

AVA: (*looks up in shock*) A sacrifice? To appease the gods that you have angered?

AIDAN: Ava... really.

AVA: Who is this... "Ava." Is she the demon sent from the bowels of hell meant to slay me? Know this—

LAURA: Stop!

AVA: That nothing you sacrifice will be worthy of—

LAURA: I said stop.

AVA: (*looks out*) I don't like being disturbed when I'm—

LAURA: None of the words coming out of your mouth are lines from this play.

AVA: But I know my motivations.

LAURA: Say the correct lines.

AVA: Good actors are not servants to the lines are that written.

LAURA: If you don't have your lines memorized by the next scene you're in, we will have a new Eleanor tomorrow.

AVA: New? Why, I don't understand.

LAURA: You'll be replaced.

AVA: Replaced?

AIDAN: She's saying you'll be out of the show.

AVA: No. I couldn't bear that. (*AVA turns to LAURA, who smiles*) I shall go and rehearse my lines then.

CARRIE: (*enters from offstage and walks over to AVA*) I could help you.

AVA: (*turns to her*) Oh, will you, dear friend? (*CARRIE nods*) And perhaps I shall help you to understand more about your character. (*they exit*)

AIDAN: Can I go use the bathroom since we can't finish the scene?

SAVANNAH *looks up at him.*

LAURA: (*sighs*) That's fine. (*AIDAN exits*) All right, let's go back to the house then, starting with Nara's line "Do not worry, Kaelyn."
(*SAVANNAH starts to act sick. She holds her stomach.*) What's wrong, Savannah?

SAVANNAH: I think I'm about to be sick. Something in the school lunch made—

EMILY: You didn't eat the school lunch today.

PAYTON: Yeah, we had it catered, remember?

SAVANNAH: (*looks at them angrily*) I did have the school lunch.

EMILY and PAYTON stare at her and then understand.

PAYTON: No, you didn't. We were all there, remember? And you said, "I will never—

SAVANNAH: Shut up, Payton. I did have the school lunch.

EMILY: (*understands*) She did have the school lunch, Payton. (*stares at PAYTON, who finally gets it*)

PAYTON: Oh, that's right. She did and now she's probably about to vomit on herself. And I've seen her vomit. Remember Emily, at the slumber party? (*SAVANNAH is trying to quiet PAYTON, who keeps going and begins to get into graphic details*)

LAURA: Okay! (*PAYTON finally stops talking*) Say no more. (*to SAVANNAH*) Savannah, do whatever you have to do.

SAVANNAH runs off, and as she passes ALYSSA she smiles at her.

ALYSSA: You know she's not really sick, right?

LAURA: Of course, but I was tired of dealing with it. I need someone to fill in for Savannah.

TONY: (*peeks his head in with a script*) I got this. (*runs over to where SAVANNAH normally is*) Let's go.

LAURA: I don't know.

TONY: Hey, I'm always willing to emasculate myself for the team. Or for any reason, really.

LAURA: Okay, fine. But take it seriously.

TONY salutes her and turns to MORGAN. MORGAN looks out at LAURA, who motions her to go ahead. She takes a moment and then continues.

MORGAN: Do not worry, Kaelyn. Tonight will be perfect. Absolutely perfect. (*GAVIN/WYNTER starts to speak*) Not a word, Wynter.

EMILY: Is this all that's coming, Kaelyn? I imagined it to be a bigger affair.

PAYTON: And I as well. I was certainly hoping for more attractive men. *(turns to GAVIN/WYNTER)* Or at least one, besides Dalton. *(to KAELYN)* So?

TONY: *(as KAELYN)* I—

MORGAN: There will be a separate event for the public. We wanted to keep tonight a small affair... *(KAELYN/TONY sits down)* in consideration of dear Ashley.

EMILY: Liza's not invited, is she?

TONY: *(as KAELYN)* She is. She is one of Dalton's closest friends.

MORGAN: *(as NARA)* Poor Dalton has a hard time choosing his friends. Isn't that correct, Wynter?

PAYTON: Elizabeth and I don't like her.

WYNTER: No worries, she feels the same about the both of you.

MORGAN: She is harmless. Simply a victim of her upbringing.

EMILY: *(to GAVIN/WYNTER)* You must be happy that Liza's coming, Wynter.

GAVIN: She has cast her spell on me.

MORGAN: *(changing the subject)* While we're waiting, I would like to propose a toast. To my daughter Kaelyn: you've waited a long time, and may tonight go exactly the way you deserve it to.

GAVIN: *(loaded)* Hear, hear. *(KAELYN/TONY glances at GAVIN/WYNTER, who smiles. There is silence. Everyone begins to look around. GAVIN/WYNTER looks at EMILY/ELIZABETH.)* How about a toast, Elizabeth?

EMILY: *(looks at him)* It's not my line.

GAVIN: It is.

EMILY: No, it's not.

PAYTON: Actually, Emily, I don't know this scene that well, nor any of the other ones, but I think they might be right.

EMILY: No, they are not. My line comes after *(points to GAVIN)* that boy over there says "Hear, hear."

MORGAN: Which he just said.

EMILY: Oh, I wasn't listening. Boy over there, could you say it again?

GAVIN: How do you not know my name? We live next door to each other. *(EMILY stares at him but doesn't say anything)* Never mind. *(in character)* Hear, hear.

There is more silence. Everyone looks at EMILY, who looks out at LAURA.

EMILY: Line.

LAURA: You can't call line. It's a dress rehearsal.

EMILY: I don't know it.

LAURA: Say something.

EMILY: I don't know what to say.

GAVIN: I already told you what to say.

EMILY: It didn't help.

LAURA: Say something.

EMILY: Fine. *(Searching for something to say and then comes up with something. She moves to center stage.)* There's no place like home. There's no place like home. There's no place like home. *(PAYTON applauds. The rest of the cast looks at her and says nothing.)*

MORGAN: I hate working with freshmen.

EMILY: It's not because I'm a freshman. It's because I haven't— *(realizes what she is about to say)* It's because I'm a freshman.

LAURA: Your line is "I would also like to make a toast."

EMILY: Really?

LAURA: Yes.

EMILY: I thought that was later.

LAURA: It's not.

EMILY: But—

LAURA: It's not.

EMILY: *(Looks at LAURA and then gets back into character. Silence. She looks back out to LAURA.)* What was it again?

LAURA: I would also like to make a toast.

EMILY: What?

GAVIN: I would also like to make a toast.

EMILY: What?

MORGAN, GAVIN, and LAURA: I would also like to make a toast!

EMILY: Oh. (*clears throat*) I would also like to make a toast.

GAVIN: About yourself, I dare say.

EMILY: (*takes a moment and then remembers it*) I know this line. (*gets back into character*) No. Well... yes. More or less.

GAVIN: Shocking.

MORGAN: Wynter, do shut up.

EMILY: Yes, do. (*GAVIN/WYNTER shrugs and sits down*) As I was saying— (*LYDIA enters, carrying sandwiches*) What are you doing?

LYDIA: Bringing more— (*She trips and the sandwiches fall all over the floor. Laughter is heard.*) Ow. That really hurt.

TONY: (*as KAELYN*) I don't remember that line. (*LYDIA looks at him*)

LYDIA: That's not funny, Tony.

TONY: (*as KAELYN*) I'm not Tony. I'm Kaelyn.

LAURA: Let's pick the sandwiches up and—

EMILY: You interrupted my toast.

PAYTON: She was like this in school, was she not?

MORGAN: We're not doing lines right now.

LYDIA: (*tries to stand up, but her ankle is hurt*) Ow! I think I broke something.

*EMILY/ELIZABETH and PAYTON/TAWNIE laugh.
Everyone turns to her.*

EMILY: Oh, the quality of help today. (*Laughs some more, but everyone is silent. She turns back to LYDIA.*) Lydia, it's your line.

PAYTON: Yeah, Lydia. Don't embarrass us.

GAVIN: We stopped like five minutes ago. And Lydia's hurt.

EMILY: (*turns*) Oh no. (*EMILY and PAYTON rush over*)

PAYTON: Are you okay?

LYDIA: I don't think I can walk.

LAURA walks on stage as EMILY and PAYTON take care of LYDIA. LAURA looks at her phone for the time. She then shakes her head and walks over to LYDIA and checks her ankle.

LAURA: Well, it's not broken. You're going to be fine.

PAYTON: Are you a doctor?

LAURA: No, I'm not, but I know enough to know that you're going to be okay. But if you don't trust me, you can get checked out after rehearsal.

EMILY: Well, Payton and I are going to take her to the mall... I mean, hospital now and—

LAURA: And if you do, you're all out of the show.

LYDIA: I don't want to be out of the show. All my friends are coming.
(PAYTON and EMILY agree)

LAURA: Good, so let's help Lydia to the couch and she can do her lines from there. And I need everyone to the stage please. (AVA, ALYSSA, HEATHER, and CARRIE enter from offstage) Do you know your lines now, Ava?

AVA: Yeah. Tell her, Carrie, how well I know my lines.

CARRIE: She knows them... better than she did.

AVA: Thank you.

CARRIE: (sees LYDIA) What happened, Lydia?

LYDIA: I tripped.

HEATHER: (to CARRIE) Walking and talking is really hard.

CARRIE: (looks to LAURA before LYDIA can reply) So where are we?

LAURA: About to run Liza's entrance all the way through until we see Ashley for the first time.

CARRIE: Where's Aidan? (AIDAN enters and crosses to CARRIE)

AIDAN: Here I am.

CARRIE: Where were you?

AIDAN: I had to use the little boys' room. Then I went to the green room.

CARRIE: No, you didn't. Ava and I were in there running her lines.

AIDAN: Well, I mean I was in there— (*SAVANNAH enters*)

SAVANNAH: I'm back.

HEATHER: Well, that's not suspicious at all.

SAVANNAH smiles at her. CARRIE looks at the two of them and then walks away. ALYSSA, trying to change the subject, turns to LAURA.

ALYSSA: So, we ready? (*GAVIN looks at her nervously*)

LAURA: Yep. Places for Liza's entrance. Leah and Ashley, go to your spot. (*EMILY raises her hand in an annoying fashion. LAURA turns to her.*) Yes, Emily?

EMILY: Payton and I sit on the couch where Lydia's sitting now. So... what do you want us to do? Sit on the floor or something?

PAYTON: (*turns to EMILY*) There's dirt on the floor.

LAURA: Just stand behind the couch.

PAYTON: For the whole scene? Our legs are really going to get tired.

LYDIA: You can both sit on my lap. But not on my ankle.

EMILY/PAYTON: Great. (*They sit on LYDIA's lap as LAURA stares at them. They look at LAURA.*) Ready.

LAURA: All right. Let's go. I need everyone to focus and play through any mistakes. For once, I would like to make it through a scene. We're not stopping for anything. Everybody got that? (*everyone agrees*) Well then, let's take it from Elizabeth's line, "As I was saying before..."

EMILY: As I was saying before... (*Silence. EMILY looks out to LAURA.*) Is there more to that line?

LAURA: Play through.

EMILY: I don't know how—

ALYSSA: (*enters as LIZA*) You're about to make a toast? I'm so glad that I didn't miss it. (*sits beside GAVIN/WYNTER*) Hello, Wynter.

GAVIN: (*takes a moment and then says his line confidently*) Hello, Liza, and Elizabeth is about to make a toast.

ALYSSA: About herself?

GAVIN: Who else?

ALYSSA: (*to EMILY/ELIZABETH*) Then don't let me stop you. Please continue.

EMILY: I can't believe you were invited.

ALYSSA: That almost sounds like you don't want me here. (*turns to GAVIN/WYNTER*) We should talk soon, Wynter.

GAVIN: (*very pointed*) Oh?

ALYSSA: Not about that. About Leah.

SAVANNAH: Did you say Leah?

ALYSSA: I talked to her earlier today.

MORGAN: It wasn't on the grounds, was it?

SAVANNAH: Did you happen to see Dalton?

*ALYSSA/LIZA is about to answer when AIDAN/
DALTON enters.*

AIDAN: I'm here. (*SAVANNAH/KAELYN rushes to him and he holds her off*) Not now. We have a problem.

SAVANNAH: A problem? Not tonight! It's our wedding night.

MORGAN: What is it?

AIDAN: Ms. Donovan is outside.

PAYTON: I thought she was locked away.

AIDAN: She escaped.

MORGAN: Where is she?

AIDAN: Leah's watching her.

EMILY: She's here too? (*AIDAN/DALTON nods*)

MORGAN: I'll have Garrick take care of this little disturbance. Garrick!

AIDAN: I just want to take her back. She doesn't mean any harm. Ever since Ashley—

LYDIA: (*breaking character, looks to everyone*) Pretend I'm saying this entering. From over there. Even though I'm not. Because of my ankle. (*everyone stares at her and she gets back into character*) Ashley? What's going on?

MORGAN: It doesn't concern you. Please—

LYDIA: How can talk of my sister not concern me?

GAVIN: Your mother's here, Vala.

LYDIA: What?

A commotion is heard in the background. TONY/GARRICK is arguing with someone. They all stop and watch as AVA/ELEANOR enters, followed closely by TONY/GARRICK.

TONY: I tried to stop her, ma'am.

MORGAN: It seems you did an awful job of *that*. (*AVA/ELEANOR is staring at MORGAN/NARA, who seems unaffected*) Hello, Eleanor. You're interrupting my daughter's special night.

AVA: (*to AIDAN/DALTON*) Dalton, so soon? And to the one—

AIDAN: She had nothing to do—

SAVANNAH: Dalton, don't argue with a crazy woman.

AVA: Ashley told me the truth.

AIDAN: Ashley's dead.

AVA: She is. She came to me in a dream and told me that tonight she walks. And you will all die.

AIDAN: Please, sit down and let's talk.

AVA: No. You must go— (*a slight light change*) It is too late.

We now see HEATHER/LEAH, alone. She is shivering slightly. SAVANNAH takes out her phone and sends a picture, unseen by the others on stage.

HEATHER: It's getting quite cold... I should... (*HEATHER/LEAH senses CARRIE/ASHLEY's presence*) Ashley.

A phone goes off. EMILY, PAYTON, and LYDIA pull out their phones. LYDIA and PAYTON put their phones up sadly. LAURA turns to them.

LAURA: I took your phones away.

EMILY: You took one of each of our phones away. *(she looks at it and her mouth goes wide)* Oh my god. You have got to see this.

EMILY shows it to LYDIA and PAYTON. Other actors then look at the phone, which shows a picture of SAVANNAH kissing AIDAN. ALYSSA looks around and notices AIDAN looking at SAVANNAH, who shrugs a “whoops.” ALYSSA crosses to SAVANNAH.

ALYSSA: Really? You had to do that right now?

SAVANNAH: Jealous?

ALYSSA: What is your problem?

LAURA: Okay, what's going on?

CARRIE: What's the picture of?

AIDAN: It's nothing.

CARRIE: Then why is everyone so interested in it?

TONY: Because it's not nothing. It's your boyfriend and Savannah doing a little... you know? *(pretends he's kissing someone)*

MORGAN: Why do you have to be such a jerk, Tony?

TONY: I don't know.

CARRIE: *(crosses to EMILY)* Let me see it.

HEATHER: *(takes her arm)* Maybe you shouldn't—

CARRIE: *(turns to her)* No. I need to see it. *(to EMILY)* Hand me your phone.

EMILY: No.

CARRIE: I said, hand me your phone.

EMILY: Fine. *(CARRIE takes the phone and crosses away)* I'm gonna need that back. That's like my next-to-last phone.

AIDAN: *(crosses to CARRIE)* Carrie... *(CARRIE doesn't turn back. She just looks at the picture. CARRIE starts to exit.)* Carrie, wait.

CARRIE: *(turns to him)* Really, Aidan?

AIDAN: I'm sorry. *(CARRIE looks at him and shakes her head)* Maybe we should go talk somewhere else?

CARRIE: Why? I think we should talk about it here. In front of everyone.

TONY: That's an idea I can get behind. (*ALYSSA hits him in the arm*) Ow, you hit really hard. For a girl. Watch yourself, Gavin.

LAURA: Guys, can we—

CARRIE: You know, I thought that maybe you two... but I just... I'm so stupid.

AIDAN: No, you're not. It's just—

ALYSSA: Carrie, let's go somewhere and—

CARRIE: (*turns to AIDAN*) Why couldn't you have waited? At least until after the show?

AIDAN: I didn't plan it. I had to go the bathroom and I didn't know—

SAVANNAH: (*walks up*) Aidan, perhaps telling her the whole truth is better now?

CARRIE: What?

AIDAN: Now is not the time.

SAVANNAH: I think it is the time. (*to CARRIE*) This... (*points to camera*) isn't a one a time thing.

CARRIE: How long have you two been messing around?

SAVANNAH: Since a little after rehearsal started.

AIDAN: I'm sorry, Carrie.

CARRIE: Sorry? That's rich. Can you tell me one thing, Aidan? Why?

AIDAN: I like you, Carrie, a lot but... she's... she's Savannah.

CARRIE: And I'm not a "Savannah."

AIDAN: That's not what I—

CARRIE: Stop.

ALYSSA: (*crosses to CARRIE and motions for HEATHER to come over*) Carrie, why don't you come with me and Heather and we—

CARRIE: Stop trying to make me leave. I'm fine.

HEATHER: But—

CARRIE: Did you two know about this? (*HEATHER and ALYSSA look uncomfortable*) But you didn't tell me? (*looks out at the rest of the students*) And the rest of you? (*they all turn their heads or look down*)

ALYSSA: We thought it best to wait.

CARRIE: (*very pointed*) Well, at least someone thought.

SAVANNAH: Face it Carrie, you and Aidan should've never been together in the first place.

AIDAN: (*rather meekly*) Shut up, Savannah.

SAVANNAH: I don't think I will.

LAURA: That's enough.

SAVANNAH: (*turns to LAURA*) No, it's not. (*turns back to CARRIE*) Carrie, you don't belong in this (*motioning to her and AIDAN*) world. You're not pretty. You may be liked, but no one would ever say you were popular. And you're only mildly talented. So if you want to stop being embarrassed, you should know your place and who you belong with. Someone like Tony.

TONY: Is that supposed to be an insult? Because I do have feelings.

GAVIN: Can we just get back to rehearsal?

SAVANNAH: (*to CARRIE*) Are you about to cry? I'm so sorry. I guess the truth does hurt.

AIDAN: Stop it, Savannah.

SAVANNAH: (*turns to AIDAN*) Feeling bad for her? Then maybe you shouldn't have cheated on her in the first place.

PAYTON: Guys, I just got something. This, what's happening now, is just like the play.

MORGAN: Thanks, Lydia.

PAYTON: No, I mean, it's exactly the same thing. Savannah acts like Carrie's friend, sort of, but secretly has a thing for Aidan. Just like—

EMILY: OMG, you're right.

PAYTON: And like, Carrie's family's even poor too. Like—

ALYSSA: (*turns to the girls*) We get it.

HEATHER: But hopefully in this version, Savannah gets what's coming to her.

A lot of chatter is going on now.

AIDAN: Can we please go talk?

CARRIE: There's nothing left to say.

SAVANNAH: She's right. There's nothing to say. *(takes AIDAN's hand, but he drops it)*

CARRIE: To Aidan, there's nothing left to say. But to you... there's a lot to say.

SAVANNAH: But you won't because you're a doormat.

Everyone responds. CARRIE runs at SAVANNAH and tackles her. ALYSSA and LAURA grab CARRIE. SAVANNAH jumps up and sees that her dress is ripped.

You ripped my dress, you little—

LAURA: That's enough!

HEATHER: She should've have ripped your face.

SAVANNAH: Shut up, Heather.

HEATHER starts to move to SAVANNAH and finally LAURA has had enough.

LAURA: I said that's enough! Now sit down! *(people are slow to move)*
Sit down!

SAVANNAH: I'm going to—

LAURA: *(very pointed)* You're going to sit down with everyone else. *(SAVANNAH takes a moment and looks at LAURA, who returns the look. SAVANNAH sits down. Looks out at all of them.)* It's time we all have a heart to heart. *(turns to CARRIE)* Carrie, I'm sorry that this happened. I really am. Know that. *(CARRIE nods slowly. LAURA turns to AIDAN.)* Aidan, I don't care who you date... at all. But this was a real jerk move. *(AIDAN starts to speak)* I don't need you to say anything. *(turns to SAVANNAH)* And Savannah, I knew girls like you growing up and let me tell you, from my experience... they always got what they deserved in the end.

SAVANNAH: Are you threatening me? You can't threaten a student.

LAURA: I'm not threatening you, Savannah. Look, you have all the talent in the world, but your ego is going to cost you at some point. Maybe sooner than you think. Now for the rest of you, our show... is the worst thing that I have ever seen in my life and we open in two days. This script means a lot to me and I will not have you destroying it. So with that in mind, tomorrow's dress rehearsal will be when you receive your final grades. *(the students begin complaining)* You can complain all you want, but this is what we're doing.

TONY: But Mr. Beasley—

LAURA: I don't care what Mr. Beasley did or didn't do because you could've done your part. Any questions?

ALYSSA: Are we going to rehearse some more?

LAURA: No, we are out of time and I have had enough for today. All of you need to go and prepare in whatever ways you need to. Morgan, you have to get over your accent. Play your character the way I know you can and do your best with the accent and it's going to be fine. Tony, focus and take things more seriously. Emily, Payton, and Lydia, if you ever want to do anything in this theatre again, which I know you do... don't ever be late again and be much better than you were today.

LYDIA: What about my ankle?

LAURA: Get some crutches if you need them. Ava, keep going over your lines. The rest of you are doing okay, but in the end it's about everybody. What time is call tomorrow?

EVERYONE: 6:00.

LAURA: Good. Now clean up your stuff, get out of here, and come back tomorrow ready to perform.

LAURA walks backstage as everyone starts to walk off. SAVANNAH tries to talk to AIDAN, but he dismisses her. AIDAN walks over to CARRIE, but she turns away. He leaves. CARRIE walks over to SAVANNAH, who turns to her.

SAVANNAH: What?

CARRIE: Look, I shouldn't have... I'm sorry about ripping your dress.

SAVANNAH: *(looks at her smugly)* And I'm sorry about stealing your boyfriend. See you tomorrow. *(walks off)*

HEATHER: (to CARRIE) You okay?

CARRIE: No, but I will be. Why didn't you tell me?

HEATHER: I never actually saw anything. I mean, I heard people talking, but it's high school. What else do they do? I'm really sorry though.

CARRIE: It's okay.

HEATHER: You know, I could get rid of her, if you want.

CARRIE: (smiles) Maybe after the show. (they laugh) No, it'll be fine. Maybe Savannah's right anyway.

HEATHER: No, she's not. Savannah's a horrible person, so if you change your mind about me getting rid of her... (she doesn't finish the sentence as they both laugh) Want to walk home together?

CARRIE: No. I think I'm going to hang out a little bit. Go over my lines and stuff.

HEATHER: All right. Call me later if you want to talk.

CARRIE: Will do. See you tomorrow when we all fail.

HEATHER: Yeah. This show is going to be awful.

They laugh and HEATHER leaves. CARRIE watches her go for a moment and then sits on the edge of the stage. LAURA, who had exited, now returns, drying her hands, and notices CARRIE sitting. She walks over to her and sits down beside her.

LAURA: Today had to be hard for you, Carrie. I'm sorry.

CARRIE: Yeah. Sorry I messed up rehearsal.

LAURA: That rehearsal was messed up a long time before that. I don't normally talk about other directors, but... wow.

CARRIE: It's really weird that he disappeared.

LAURA: Maybe he got burned out. After tonight, I completely understand.

CARRIE: Yeah.

LAURA: Seriously though, you never know why people do what they do. Much too complicated. Except people like Savannah.

CARRIE: What?

LAURA: Nothing. You have any questions for me? About your character or the play?

CARRIE: No. Well, yeah. Earlier you made it seem like you believe that the ghost stuff actually happened. Do you?

LAURA: Honestly? (*CARRIE nods*) I know it did. The things that I've heard about that night... there's no way it can't be true. Don't tell anyone else I said that. Don't want to freak them out right before the show.

CARRIE: Wait. You're serious?

LAURA: I am. Some people say they still see her at times at the Falls.

CARRIE: But the play—

LAURA: I said they didn't get everything right. Besides, what's really permanent in this world?

CARRIE: Certainly not a high school relationship. (*they laugh*) I wonder what she was like. Ashley?

LAURA: Probably a lot like you. That's a compliment, by the way. In the pictures of her that I saw, she was very pretty. She was also one of the kindest people that I've ever known. (*CARRIE looks at her, confused*) I mean, I didn't actually know her, clearly, but stories of her always talked of her kindness. (*CARRIE smiles*)

CARRIE: It's sad that she died the way she did.

LAURA: Yeah, people suck. (*CARRIE looks at her and LAURA changes the subject*) Did Heather leave?

CARRIE: Yeah. Why?

LAURA: I got that spell that Heather asked for from my office, and I wanted her to practice with it tonight.

CARRIE: I could give it to her. I walk right by her house.

LAURA: Could you do that for me?

CARRIE: Sure.

LAURA: (*takes out a piece of paper and hands it to CARRIE who looks at it*) Thanks. Quick question: Are you going to be okay tomorrow night? Put all of that with Savannah and Aidan aside. At least for the show.

CARRIE: I will. I won't let everyone down.

LAURA: I suppose we could change the script and let you actually kill her. (*CARRIE looks at her, shocked*) In the script. (*CARRIE smiles*) You know, I went through the same thing when I was your age. It was a rough time.

CARRIE: But it's not about me, right?

LAURA: Well, it kind of is. Hey, I have something for you that just might help. Here. (*LAURA takes out a ring and hands it to her*)

CARRIE: Ashley's prop ring?

LAURA: No. Her real ring. Got it from a friend of the family before I left.

CARRIE: Is this the one she was wearing when she—

LAURA: That's what they say.

CARRIE: Creepy. So what do you want me to do with it?

LAURA: Wear it. Tonight and during the show. It might help you get into character.

CARRIE: Okay. Thanks.

LAURA: You're welcome. So you're leaving now?

CARRIE: It might take me a little while. I have to get my stuff.

LAURA: Well, I have a meeting to get to. You think you can turn off the house lights for me?

CARRIE: Sure. Hey. (*LAURA turns*) So this really is the real spell?

LAURA: And the real ring. If somebody killed a dove in this building, you have a spell in your hand that will work. I mean, if you believe that stuff.

CARRIE: Really?

LAURA: (*stares at her for a long moment but then smiles*) No. But you know what might help you? It might make you feel better to pretend that it is a real spell.

CARRIE: What?

LAURA: After I leave, put the ring on, say the spell and think about someone who's hurt you while you're saying it. You know, pay someone back without actually doing anything.

CARRIE: But what if it worked?

LAURA: It won't. Probably. *(LAURA smiles)* Well, I have to go. Thanks again for dropping that off to Heather. Get some rest tonight. Big show tomorrow. *(CARRIE nods and smiles. LAURA gets up and starts to leave. She turns back.)* I really think you should do it. The spell. It will help more than you know.

LAURA exits. CARRIE watches her leave and then looks at the ring.

CARRIE: Ashley's ring. It's really pretty. *(looks at spell)* I wonder if... well, it can't hurt.

Puts ring on and opens the sheet of paper with the spell. She begins reading.

Adoni, Helumnay, Peenay,
 Adoni, Helumnay, Peenay,
 Thy gods command thee
 oh mapulamun,
 Adoni, Helumnay, Peenay,
 come forward blessed sister,
 know your calling
 come forward Ashley Donovan.
 Vengeance you shall seek.
 accept my gift
 an offering
 for in death, bring life,
 and make right what is wrong.

As soon, she finishes, the lights flicker. CARRIE looks around.

Well, that wasn't creepy at all. Have to stop letting this play get to me.

She gets up, gets her stuff, and starts to leave. She laughs and goes to turn out the stage lights. She does but remembers her bag.

My bag. Crap.

She turns the lights back and ASHLEY DONOVAN is standing on stage but CARRIE doesn't see her. She gets her bag and then leaves as ASHLEY watches her go. Lights slowly fade.

ACT II**Scene I**

Setting: Various.

At Rise: Ashland Falls. Night. The stage is dark. We hear wind blowing. A spotlight reveals LEAH, the sister of ASHLEY, the girl who died. She has a knife in one hand and a piece of paper in the other. She begins reading from the paper.

LEAH: Adoni, Helumnay, Peenay,
Adoni, Helumnay, Peenay,
Thy gods command thee
oh mapulamun,
Adoni, Helumnay, Peenay,
come forward blessed sister,
know your calling
come forward oh blessed sister.
Vengeance you shall seek.

LEAH then begins stabbing inside the box.

accept my gift
an offering
for in death, bring life,
and make right what is wrong.

LEAH reaches into box and digs out a heart. She holds it above her and tosses it offstage. A moment passes.

Very soon, dear sister, we shall be avenged.

Lights fade on LEAH and up on downstage center. We're in KAELYN's room. We see ASHLEY getting her hair brushed by KAELYN, a childhood friend.

ASHLEY: Do you believe it is so, Kaelyn?

KAELYN: Oh, I'm most sure of it, Ashley. Wynter told me that he's talked about it nonstop.

ASHLEY: Oh, I do hope it's true. I've dreamt of Dalton proposing to me for so long. *(turns to KAELYN)* How do you suppose he'll do it?

KAELYN: Dalton is a hopeless romantic, so one would imagine it will be magical. *(KAELYN walks off slightly)* And the two of you will no doubt live a very joyous life together. *(Her voice has changed. Almost angry.)*

ASHLEY: What troubles you, Kaelyn?

KAELYN: (*turns away*) Nothing. It's just... I wonder sometimes when I will find... my Dalton.

ASHLEY: It will happen. I'm sure of it.

KAELYN: If only I could believe that. (*Silence. Turns back to ASHLEY.*) But tonight isn't about me. It's about you and the wonderful thing that's going to happen to you. You and Dalton will be forever happy.

ASHLEY: (*turns away*) I believe that for me, but for Dalton... (*doesn't finish the thought*)

KAELYN: What?

ASHLEY: (*turns to KAELYN*) He told me yesterday that his father had threatened to take his position away and remove him from his will if he marries me.

KAELYN: You're more important than money to Dalton.

ASHLEY: But he still thought to tell me. It's as if he wanted me to know the sacrifice he was making. (*silence*) Perhaps his father's right. Perhaps I will only bring shame to his family name. I told him I would understand if he wanted to be with someone else. (*turns to KAELYN*) Someone like you.

KAELYN: No.

ASHLEY: You're beautiful, and your family is far superior to mine. I've often told Dalton that you two were meant to be together.

KAELYN: What did he say when you said that?

ASHLEY: He said it was I who he loved and nothing else mattered.

KAELYN: Just like Dalton to turn a blind eye to... (*ASHLEY looks at her, causing KAELYN to stop. KAELYN takes ASHLEY by the hand.*) It is you and Dalton that were meant to be together. And tonight, at Ashland Falls, it shall become official.

ASHLEY: Ashland Falls. It's where we first kissed, you know. And in a way, it's where my life began.

KAELYN: And where it will end. (*ASHLEY turns to her*) Your life alone, that is.

ASHLEY: You're being quite odd tonight, Kaelyn. As if there's something you're not telling me. Is there? Do you know something?

KAELYN: What would there be to know?

ASHLEY: I don't know, but when our talk turned to Dalton, something about you changed.

KAELYN: You're anxious and imagining things. Now hurry along. It's almost dusk. And remember, Dalton wanted you to get there first. There's something he wanted you to see.

ASHLEY: *(smiles)* What do you suppose—

KAELYN: I haven't a clue, but I imagine it's wonderful. Now hurry. I've had Garrick bring the carriage around for you.

ASHLEY: *(turns to leave and then turns back)* What would I do without you, my dear friend?

KAELYN smiles and they hug. ASHLEY leaves as KAELYN watches her with a look that's hard to define. Lights come up on The Worthington Parlor. We see NARA, KAELYN's mother and GARRICK, her servant.

NARA: *(Looking out the window. In a flawless British accent.)* It's almost dusk. Soon it will be done, Garrick.

GARRICK: Yes ma'am.

NARA: Is everything as I required?

GARRICK: It is. I have provided a carriage for Ms. Ashley. She should be departing soon.

NARA: And mine?

GARRICK: It is also taken care of. As are all the items at the Falls, including the letter. Exactly as you wanted.

NARA: And you covered your tracks?

GARRICK: Of course. Nothing will be traced back to the house.

NARA: Excellent. I should be on my way then. To see her face when she reads the letter.

GARRICK: If you don't mind my inquiring, Ms. Worthington, about the contents of the letter?

NARA: I do mind, Garrick. Remember your place.

GARRICK: Yes, ma'am. It shall not happen again.

NARA: (*begins putting on her gloves*) Let us go. I don't wish to be out all night.

GARRICK and NARA leave as the lights go down. The lights go up on an outdoor scene. DALTON is sitting on a bench. His friend WYNTER stands next to him.

WYNTER: I can't believe you're going to go through with this.

DALTON: What reason would I have not to?

WYNTER: I can think of many.

DALTON: (*turns to him*) Really?

WYNTER: (*crosses to him*) Listen, I'm your friend and I've always had your best interests at heart.

DALTON: When have you ever had my best interests at heart?

WYNTER: When it benefited me, of course. Like now. (*DALTON laughs*) Listen Dalton, I know she's beautiful and also quite charming. But her looks will soon fade and then you'll be left with a homely, charming, penniless girl.

DALTON: My looks will fade as well, and I already lack charm.

WYNTER: But you are not penniless. At least not yet. (*he laughs and sits down*) Besides that, why tie yourself down to one woman when you can have them all?

DALTON: What you desire, Wynter, is not what I desire. You care for only three things in a woman. Looks, money, and the fact that there should always be more than one.

WYNTER: What else is there? (*he laughs*) And money should have come first.

DALTON: Of course.

WYNTER: (*takes a moment, looking at DALTON*) But in this case there's something else.

DALTON: What?

WYNTER: Listen, you always think with your heart and I've always been the one—

DALTON: Without one?

WYNTER: (*takes a moment and looks at DALTON*) You're very witty tonight. And perhaps you're right, but I do know this. You don't just marry the girl. You marry her family, and in Ashley's case, they're an embarrassment. If you marry her, they will bring that embarrassment to your name. To your family name, and your father has been quite clear—

DALTON: She's a wonderful girl, Wynter.

WYNTER: This is not about her, Dalton. This is about what you will lose. And my god... her family? Her father's a criminal, her mother a beggar, Vala is a servant, and Leah... the things that are wrong with her. Though she is rather nice to look at.

DALTON: What is your point?

WYNTER: How do you not see my point? You should be marrying someone else. Someone of better lineage.

DALTON: Like whom? Kaelyn?

WYNTER: She is quite... ravishing. A bit of a... you know, but yes, someone like Kaelyn.

DALTON: So it would please my father and keep me in the will?

WYNTER: There are worse things.

DALTON: (*crosses away*) Wynter, I know your heart is in the right place, but I want to marry Ashley because I love her.

WYNTER: Bravo then. When your father cuts you out of the will, you two may live off of your love and the fruits of the land.

DALTON: I don't care about any of that.

WYNTER: You say that, but I have doubts.

DALTON: I don't have time to debate with you, Wynter. If I'm going to do this, I ought not be late.

WYNTER: Hear me out, then. Last time, I promise. Let's go the pub and forget about all of this.

DALTON: And that's your final argument?

WYNTER: It does involve going to the pub.

DALTON: No.

WYNTER: Well, then... I suppose I support you, though I really don't.

DALTON smiles and leaves WYNTER. We then see ASHLEY alone on stage. We hear the sound of the ocean. She's holding the letter, reading it. The more she reads, the sadder she becomes. Suddenly, she rips it up and looks over the falls. A figure in black appears behind her. ASHLEY turns and the lights black out.

Scene 2

Setting: 2 years later. The Worthington Parlor and Outside of the Worthington House.

At Rise: The stage is divided into sections. On one part of the stage is the living room of NARA WORTHINGTON, where KAELYN and WYNTER are in a freeze. On another part of the stage, we see LEAH, ASHLEY's sister, outside wearing a coat. VALA, ASHLEY's younger sister, enters wearing her maid outfit. LEAH turns and sees her.

LEAH: I can't believe you work for them.

VALA: It's honorable work. More than I can say for yours.

LEAH: *(smiles)* Honorable? Working for the family who's responsible for your sister's death—

VALA: They are not... she did it to herself.

LEAH: You know that's not true.

VALA: She left a note.

LEAH: Why would someone kill herself when she had everything she could ever want?

VALA: I don't have an answer for that.

LEAH: Oh, but you do. You just choose to ignore it because the answers are found at the door of your employers. *(looks at house)*

VALA: What do you need? I know you weren't invited.

LEAH: I was not. I came to give you a gift. I want you to wear it tonight. *(hands VALA ASHLEY's necklace)*

VALA: This is Ashley's necklace.

LEAH: It is. Dalton gave it to her.

VALA: How did you get it? She was wearing it the night she—

LEAH: Don't worry about how I got it. Honor her. By wearing it tonight.

VALA: Her honor cannot be the only reason.

LEAH: (*looks at her but doesn't answer right away*) It is.

VALA: But why tonight?

LEAH: The marriage of her beloved to her murderer seems the perfect occasion.

VALA: Tell me the truth.

LEAH: That is the truth.

VALA: Did you do something?

LEAH: (*smiles*) What on earth could I have done?

VALA: (*looks at the necklace, then back to LEAH*) But what if Dalton recognizes it? Or Kaelyn? I could lose—

LEAH: Putting your employers over your family, are we?

VALA: You know that's not—

LEAH: Do I? We both know what your childhood dreams were about. Leaving us behind, even Ashley, to be in a new family. You think I didn't hear your stories that you told yourself? Or your prayers?

VALA: (*starting to stutter*) I was just a child.

LEAH: And now you're an adult, working here, still chasing that fantasy. (*laughs*) I wonder if the Worthingtons see you as part of their clan. Highly doubtful. Since you're their lowly maid.

VALA: (*stutters*) Shut up! You don't know—

LEAH: I see you still stutter when you get upset. Wonder when that started. (*VALA turns away*) Face it, you will never be accepted by these people, Vala. Neither one of us will. They've always treated us as if we were nothing more than stray dogs looking for scraps, and that will never change. Never mind that they killed our sister and drove our mother insane.

VALA: She's not insane!

LEAH: Is that why they locked her away? Because she wasn't insane? (*VALA starts to protest*) Listen to me, Vala, you and I are all that

we have. I know you wish that weren't true, but it is. And all I'm asking you to do is honor your sister by wearing the necklace. Nothing more.

VALA: Why is it so important to you? That I wear the necklace? (*LEAH doesn't answer*) It's some kind of witchcraft, isn't it? You and Liza—

LEAH: Liza has nothing to do with this. But yes. It is.

VALA: What kind of—

LEAH: It's best that you don't know.

VALA: Tell me!

LEAH: Ashley must be avenged. Our family must be avenged.

VALA: She wouldn't have wanted that. That's always been your—

LEAH: Either way. Ashley deserved better. Now, when you're inside, put on the necklace. For our family. For Ashley. Say you will.

VALA: Will harm come to them?

LEAH: If they are innocent, then no harm will come their way. Will you wear it?

VALA: I don't know. (*silence*) But I do know this: that after tonight, I have no family.

VALA turns and exits as LEAH watches her go. LIZA enters.

LIZA: You two get along so well.

LEAH: Ashley was always her favorite. Ashley was always everyone's favorite. Myself included.

LIZA: What did you want her to do?

LEAH: Wear Ashley's necklace, and she will.

LIZA: Didn't sound like it.

LEAH: She will. The Worthingtons themselves will see to it, I have no doubt. And then they will have one more guest at the wedding.

LIZA: Who?

LEAH: Ashley, of course.

LIZA: What?

LEAH: (*nonchalantly*) That's right. I didn't tell you. I did a spell to bring Ashley back. You know, the one where you chant some things and take a dove and cut its heart—

LIZA: How did you know that spell?

LEAH: I broke into your house and stole one of your books. (LEAH takes out an old book and hands it to LIZA) This one.

LIZA: (*her eyes grow wide*) I don't even use the spells in here. Because no one's supposed to.

LEAH: I suppose you shouldn't have showed it to me then. By the way, what is this circle the book spoke of?

LIZA: It means that a lot of people are going to die tonight if it works.

LEAH: It will.

LIZA: But for you to bring her back, that necklace had to be the one... (LEAH smiles) No.

LEAH: Yes. It was the one Dalton gave her.

LIZA: But she was buried with it. So you—

LEAH: I will do whatever it takes.

LIZA: Do you understand what you've done? What will actually be brought back if Vala puts on that necklace in there?

LEAH: Yes. My sister.

LIZA: (*shakes her head*) Your sister as a monster. She's going to kill everyone.

LEAH: Only those that deserved to. Everyone in the "circle." I imagine that you are safe.

LIZA: What about you?

LEAH: I have no doubt what fate awaits me. I have made peace with it and in some ways... welcome it.

LIZA: What about Vala? Or the fact that Ashley, if she completes the circle, will be—

LEAH: Some things can't be controlled. Because the Worthingtons must suffer, and tonight they will. You should go in now. Don't want to be late.

LIZA: You should go far away from here.

LEAH: And miss all the fun? No, I don't think I will. (*LIZA nods*) Say hello to Wynter for me.

LEAH exits. LIZA watches her leave, then turns to go in.

Scene 3

Setting: The Worthington Parlor.

At Rise: KAELYN is looking in the mirror, fixing her hair, while WYNTER looks out the window.

WYNTER: Your timing could not be more intriguing, Kaelyn.

KAELYN: What do you mean?

WYNTER: Two years to the day that your best friend went over the falls, and you and her beloved are to become husband and wife.

KAELYN: I'm honoring her, Wynter.

WYNTER: And what an honor it is. Her best friend becoming the wife of the man she loved.

KAELYN: She's dead.

WYNTER: That she is. Very hard to survive a tumble off the Falls. Which I imagine is what you wanted.

KAELYN: (*turns to WYNTER*) Are you suggesting that I had something to do with it?

WYNTER: Never.

KAELYN: Good. Because Ashley was like a sister to me, and it broke my heart when she threw herself over the falls.

WYNTER: I'm sure it did, Kaelyn. I'm sure it did.

KAELYN: (*crosses over to WYNTER*) I don't like your tone, Wynter.

WYNTER: Listen, Kaelyn. I wasn't too fond of the idea of Dalton marrying her either. I even tried to talk him out of it. I wouldn't have thought to kill her, but—

KAELYN: (*grabs WYNTER*) She killed herself, Wynter!

NARA enters with ELIZABETH and TAWNIE.

NARA: Interesting choice of topic for tonight. Perhaps we should choose another.

WYNTER and KAELYN look up and see them.

WYNTER: Indeed. Shall we talk of your beauty, Ms. Worthington?

NARA: Flattery will get you nowhere, Wynter. Nor will your infantile humor, for that matter. Though I'm sure your life has already proven that.

WYNTER: Delightful as always, Ms. Worthington.

NARA: *(walks over to KAELYN)* Tonight is to be a celebration of Dalton and my dear Kaelyn.

ELIZABETH: Where is that handsome soon-to-be husband of yours?

TAWNIE: He is quite delightful to look at.

KAELYN: *(smiling)* And quite taken. His father had him closing the office today. He shall be here shortly.

Blackout.

Scene 4

Setting: The woods surrounding The Worthington Estate.

At Rise: We see DALTON enter hurriedly and stops when he sees LEAH.

DALTON: Leah? What are you doing here?

LEAH: I was dropping off supper for one of the Worthingtons's servants.

DALTON: Stop lying.

LEAH: Why does no one trust me? And oh, congratulations on your pending marriage.

DALTON: *(takes a moment to look at her)* I want you to know that I loved your sister.

LEAH: And I'm sure that she would love to know of your impending marriage to the woman who killed her.

DALTON: That's not fair, Leah. Ashley—

LEAH: Killed herself. And Kaelyn had nothing to with it and—

DALTON: You read the—

LEAH: The letter? Yes, I did. Has it never struck you odd that you never knew those feelings existed in Ashley?

DALTON: Ashley was not as open as—

LEAH: I know you would like to think that was true, but...

*LEAH freezes, looking over DALTON's shoulder.
ELEANOR enters.*

DALTON: What?

LEAH: Mother? (*DALTON turns around*) How did you—

DALTON: Ms. Donovan. You shouldn't be here. Let me—

ELEANOR: I've come for you.

DALTON: (*turns to LEAH*) Did you have something to do with this?

LEAH: No, we're not on the best of terms.

ELEANOR: (*to DALTON*) The doors were opened for me. Because she came to me. In a dream. I saw her.

DALTON: Who? Who are you talking about?

ELEANOR: (*collapses to the ground*) She was such a pretty little girl. Never hurt anyone. Always loved her mother. Only wanted... but no. No, no, no. Was not to be. Not to be. (*Shakes back and forth. DALTON turns to LEAH.*) And now she's back. But she doesn't want to be. She just wants to be free.

DALTON: I'm going to the house to get Garrick. We shall take her back.

LEAH: Yes, you should do that.

DALTON: Keep her here.

LEAH: Of course.

DALTON leaves and LEAH watches him go. She then kneels down and lifts her mother's chin. ELEANOR looks at her.

ELEANOR: Why would you do such a thing?

LEAH: I'm giving her back to you.

ELEANOR: No. You're condemning her.

LEAH: They have to pay for what they did to her. What they did to us.

ELEANOR: Always so angry. And now... this. It isn't right.

LEAH: Nothing is right, mother. But they will suffer for their sins.

ELEANOR: (*stands up and takes LEAH by the shoulder*) No, I will warn them.

LEAH: What? What is it with this family and worrying about the well-being of the Worthingtons?

ELEANOR: I'm not doing it for them. I'm doing it for Ashley. To save her.

LEAH: Do you think they will listen to you? A crazy woman?

ELEANOR: Crazy? How could you call your mother that?

LEAH: Because you are. (*turns away*)

ELEANOR: What happened to you?

LEAH: Nothing happened to me.

ELEANOR: No. Something did. (*grabs her and turns her around*) Talk to me. I'm your mother.

LEAH: Oh. You want to be my mother now? And find out what happened to me? Fine. It started when I discovered that I was the mistake. That I wasn't wanted. Remember? You made that clear on my sixth birthday when I cried because I didn't get to have a party. Do you know what it feels like to have your mother tell you that she never wanted you in the first place?

ELEANOR: I shouldn't have said... I was going through so much then.

LEAH: I was six. And then Father left, I grew older and you grew more distant. I remember how it was always you, Ashley, and Vala. With me watching.

ELEANOR: I thought you needed—

LEAH: I needed a mother. I needed someone to make me feel like I mattered. (*ELEANOR starts to speak*) No. And then when Ashley died, the one member of the family that held us together, you hid. Denied it happened. Buried it all in a bottle. So I was the one that was there for Vala when she cried at night because her sister was dead and her mom was a drunk. Not to mention all those

rumors going around. And I lay with her every night until she fell asleep. But you know what? There was no one that was there for me. No one. So if you want to know what happened to me... mother... you did. And I dealt with things in my own way. *(silence)* Now, go in and warn them. It's not going to do you or them any good.

ELEANOR: I'm so sorry.

ELEANOR backs away, then exits to go to the house.

Scene 5

Setting: The Worthington Parlor.

At Rise: NARA is standing behind KAELYN, with one of her hands on her shoulder.

NARA: Do not worry, Kaelyn. Tonight will be perfect. Absolutely perfect. *(WYNTER starts to speak)* Not a word, Wynter.

TAWNIE: Is this all that's coming, Kaelyn? I imagined it to be a bigger affair.

KAELYN: I—

NARA: There will be an event later for the public. We wanted to keep tonight a small affair... *(KAELYN sits down)* in consideration of dear Ashley.

ELIZABETH: Liza's not invited, is she?

KAELYN: She is. She's one of Dalton's closest friends.

NARA: Poor Dalton has a hard time choosing his friends. Isn't that correct, Wynter?

TAWNIE: Elizabeth and I don't like her. *(WYNTER smiles)*

WYNTER: No worries. She feels the same about both of you.

NARA: She is harmless. Simply a victim of her upbringing.

ELIZABETH: *(to WYNTER)* You must be happy that she's coming, Wynter.

WYNTER: She has cast her spell on me.

NARA: Well, that may be true, but I would now like to propose a toast. To my daughter Kaelyn: You have waited a long time for this, so may tonight go exactly as you deserve it to.

WYNTER: *(loaded)* Hear, hear?

KAELYN: *(glances at WYNTER, who smiles)* Thank you, mother.

ELIZABETH: I would also like to propose a toast.

WYNTER: About yourself, I dare say.

ELIZABETH: No. Well... yes. More or less.

WYNTER: Shocking.

NARA: Wynter, do shut up.

TAWNIE: Yes, do. *(WYNTER shrugs and sits down. TAWNIE turns to ELIZABETH.)* I would love to hear your toast, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: Thank you. As I was saying—

VALA enters, carrying sandwiches.

What are you doing?

VALA: Bringing in more sandwiches.

ELIZABETH: You interrupted my toast.

VALA: Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't—

VALA stumbles over her words and then drops her sandwiches. ELIZABETH laughs.

ELIZABETH: Oh, the quality of help today. She was like this at school, wasn't she?

TAWNIE: She was. Always stumbling over her words. Stutter, stutter, stutter. Didn't it happen when your sister died?

KAELYN: Don't speak of her sister, Tawnie. Not tonight.

TAWNIE: Sorry, love. *(to VALA)* Your childhood was awful, wasn't it Vala? Now you're a maid.

ELIZABETH: It is what she was meant to be. Like mother, like daughter. Perhaps she'll go crazy as well.

VALA: *(stuttering)* She's... she's not—

TAWNIE: *(mocking her)* Wha... wha...

WYNTER: (*gets up and looks at ELIZABETH and TAWNIE*) That's enough. (*starts to help VALA pick up the sandwiches*) I'll help you.

VALA: You don't have to.

WYNTER: It's fine.

NARA: She's right. Stand up, Wynter. (*WYNTER turns but does not stand*) You're a guest of the family. Not a servant. We pay her to do her job.

WYNTER: It's all right. (*he continues to help, but VALA puts her hand over his*)

VALA: Ple... please stop.

WYNTER: (*looks at her and then stops*) Very well. (*stands as VALA finishes picking the sandwiches up*)

NARA: Vala?

VALA: Yes?

NARA: Next time, ask before entering. You're forgetting your place.

VALA: Mm...my place?

NARA: Yes, your place. You are not a member of this family. You are a servant. I know that we treat you well, but one must not take advantage of it or it will be taken away.

VALA nods, begins to exit, then reaches into her pocket and takes out the necklace as ELIZABETH begins again.

ELIZABETH: As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted. My toast is—

LIZA enters and ELIZABETH stares.

LIZA: You're about to make a toast? I'm so glad that I didn't miss it. (*sits beside WYNTER*) Hello, Wynter.

WYNTER: Hello, Liza. And, yes, Elizabeth is about to make a toast.

LIZA: Delightful. About herself?

WYNTER: Who else?

LIZA: (*to ELIZABETH*) Then don't let me stop you. Please continue.

ELIZABETH: I can't believe you were invited.

LIZA: That almost sounds as if you don't want me here. (*turning to WYNTER*) We need to talk.

WYNTER: Oh?

LIZA: About Leah.

KAELYN: Did you say Leah?

LIZA: I talked to her earlier today.

NARA: It wasn't on the grounds, was it?

KAELYN: Did you happen to see Dalton?

LIZA is about to answer when DALTON enters.

DALTON: I'm here. (*KAELYN rushes to him and he holds her off*) Not now. We have a problem.

KAELYN: A problem? Not tonight! It's our wedding night.

NARA: What is it?

DALTON: Ms. Donovan is outside.

ELIZABETH: I thought she was locked away.

DALTON: She escaped.

NARA: Is she alone?

DALTON: Leah's watching her.

TAWNIE: She's here too? (*DALTON nods*)

NARA: I'll have Garrick take care of this little disturbance. Garrick!

DALTON: I just want to take her back. She doesn't mean any harm. Ever since Ashley—

VALA has reentered, wearing the necklace.

VALA: Ashley? What's going on?

NARA: It doesn't concern you. Please—

VALA: How can talk of my sister not concern me?

WYNTER: Your mother's here, Vala.

VALA: What?

A commotion is heard in the background. GARRICK is arguing with someone. They all stop and watch as ELEANOR enters, followed closely by GARRICK.

GARRICK: I tried to stop her, ma'am.

NARA: It seems you did an awful job of *that*. (*ELEANOR is staring at NARA, who seems unaffected*) Hello, Eleanor. (*ELEANOR looks around*) You're interrupting my daughter's special night.

ELEANOR: Dalton, so soon? And to the one—

DALTON: She had nothing to do—

KAELYN: Dalton, don't argue with a crazy woman.

ELEANOR: Ashley told me the truth.

KAELYN: Ashley's dead.

ELEANOR: She is. She came to me in a dream and said that tonight she walks. And you will all die.

DALTON: Please, sit down and let's talk.

ELEANOR: No. You must go. (*a slight light change*) It is too late.

A light comes up on LEAH, alone. She is shivering slightly. ASHLEY enters unseen.

LEAH: It's getting cold... I should... (*LEAH senses ASHLEY's presence*) Ashley.

She turns and ASHLEY just stares. Lights fade and we return to the living room.

NARA: I've had enough of this. Garrick, get her out of here.

GARRICK grabs ELEANOR, who doesn't resist. As she exits, she turns to KAELYN.

ELEANOR: Such a good girl you were. You were Ashley's best friend. You shouldn't have done what she told you to do.

NARA: Get her out of here, Garrick.

VALA: (*steps up*) I'll take her.

NARA: You'll do no such thing. Garrick is fully capable of—

DALTON: (*crosses to the door*) I'll go with him, Vala.

NARA: No one is leaving. Besides this woman.



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