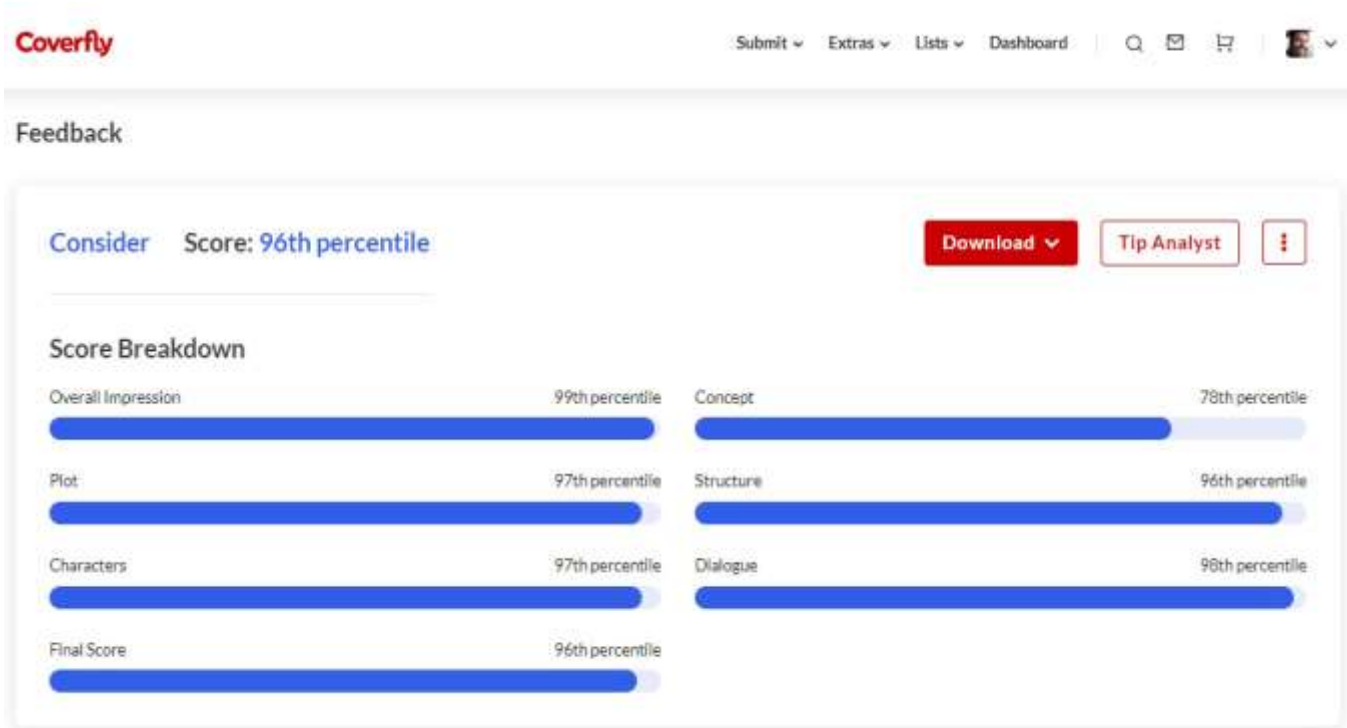


THE MAN TOY

by

Thom Bierdz



A twisted comedy / anti-rom-com about a sexy young male escaped convict, Cody, who finds temporary refuge in a remote wilderness cabin inhabited by middle-aged Doris, a deranged, emotionally unstable woman living in fantasy and isolation. As Cody exploits Doris's loneliness and innocence for food, shelter, and money to escape town, he unwittingly attracts the attention of Doris's older sister Lilith - a seductive, damaged woman trapped in a loveless, abusive marriage to a powerful cop. As older Lilith and younger Cody fall in love, she uses his past guilt to manipulate a psychological prison to contain, control, and possess him as the one lover unable to ever leave her, meanwhile providing lonely Doris the household companion she desperately needs.

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FADE IN:

INT. CELL - PRISON - SUNBAR COUNTY, N.C. - DAWN - 2026

Behind bars, naked CODY (29, gorgeous, muscular) shivers curled up on a cold cement bed frame.

CODY

It's freezing!

SAL (V.O.)

Freeze.

CODY

Come on, I'm going to freeze to death!
Where is my mattress? Give me my clothes.

A big guard, SAL (50, unattractive) drops an orange prison JUMPSUIT between the bars. Cody jumps down to grab it. Sal grabs it back, LAUGHS, wipes the grimy wet floor with it.

CODY (CONT'D)

What did I ever do to you?

SAL

Prison ain't 'spose to be comfortable.

Vulnerable Cody sits in a ball, shivering, rocking into an inch of sunlight that sneaks through the barred window.

SAL (CONT'D)

Prison is 'spose to punish.

CODY

The punishment is being here. We're not supposed to be tortured.

SAL

(laughing)

You deserve food, clothes and mattresses?
Can I get you a room service menu??

Sal urinates on the jumpsuit, LAUGHS.

SAL (CONT'D)

Wear it, moron, and I might put you on laundry duty today.

EXT. SUNBAR COUNTY - DAWN

AERIAL VIEW: from the prison across the forest with sporadic rustic homes to Victorian manors on the beach.

EXT. BEACHFRONT VICTORIAN MANORS - DAY

On a white Victorian manor facing a walkway and the beach.

INT/EXT. FOYER - VICTORIAN MANOR - DAY

Windy. Peeking through curtains is a gorgeous blonde in a white silk robe, LILITH JONES (60+). She smiles and opens the door to a mailman, PETE (25, cute).

PETE

Lilith Jones?

He speaks with a Midwest accent and hands her a SMALL BOX and LETTERS. She speaks with a Southern accent.

LILITH

We met in the charity bakery where I volunteer on weekends, Pete. You had recently relocated.

PETE

Were you the gal who kept fussin' with the decorations when I picked up my wedding cake?

LILITH

The bells on the cake were supposed to ring. I must've smudged icing in them.

PETE

Who needs a cake to ring anyway? This letter is for an Officer Jon Jones?

LILITH

Jon just left for work.

PETE

Have a nice day.

Pete leaves. She stares after him awhile. Too long.

DINING ROOM

Lilith rips open the box, takes out a set of SILVER FORKS, places the new forks on her table - but they do not match the beautiful PEWTER CIVIL WAR CUTLERY that is already there (a complete set minus the forks). She SCREAMS, paces, shakes.

Macho husband JON (60, in police uniform) enters.

JON

I forgot my gun ... Why you shaking?

She points at the forks. He lightly smacks her head.

JON (CONT'D)

Those forks don't match. The Women Society gonna be here tomorrow.

LILITH

They're going to laugh at me.

JON

I'll join 'em. These forks are bad copies! Get the real ones from Doris!

LILITH

She won't give them up, Jon!

JON

Just take 'em from the dimwit!

LILITH

I can't just swipe them from her!

JON

Don't you raise your voice to me!

He slaps her to the floor. She SHRIEKS briefly in pain but like a rag doll does not fight back.

JON (CONT'D)

Who pay for your sister's shack and all property taxes and all utilities and all groceries?

LILITH

You do ... We thank you, Jon.

EXT. SUNBAR COUNTY - DAY

AERIAL VIEW: from their Victorian beach home to the forest with rustic homes to deeper forest with a two-story shack.

EXT. SHACK - FOREST - DAY

Windy. Hidden in the trees is an isolated two-story shack. So old it leans and the white paint peels.

ADJACENT: a SCARECROW in flannel coat and an ominous dead oak tree flank a winding garden of flowers, kale, squash and pumpkins.

Baby Jane Hudson crazy DORIS ADELSON (48, frumpy, plain) in an old sundress gives an imaginary press conference. She gets LIPSTICK from her pocket, applies way too much.

DORIS

I'm not used to so many reporters!
You're all here to see my beauty? This
is so unexpected to win Miss Universe
... again! ... Oh look! It's the last
tomato of the season!! Hi there!

She picks the one TOMATO, pets it, kisses it.

DORIS (CONT'D)

I won't have another for eight months!

She twirls in glee then pockets it, looks around, pretends to grab something.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Are all these balloons for me? I love
balloons. How thoughtful!

She puts the scarecrows' hands on her, then slaps them off.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Jon, I'm too busy with my beauty
duties! They demand I fly all over the
universe because I am Miss Universe ...
Here I step into the airplane.

She pretends to step into a plane, then she steps down.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Oh, look, now I am walking out on the planet Venus to greet my fans and publicist. I can't stay too long because it's so hot.

She continues her fantasy unaware Pete's mail truck stops in the dirt driveway. He gets out and as he walks to the shack porch to drop mail he dials and speaks into his CELL PHONE.

PETE

Babe, I'm in the dirt driveway of a nutcase who's talking to a scarecrow!

INT. PETE'S CABIN - DAY - SAME

PETE'S WIFE (25) talks into the phone.

PETE'S WIFE

Why did we move here?! Be careful! I hear witches live in those woods!

BACK TO PETE:

He CHUCKLES and gets back in his truck and drives away - not seeing Doris chase his vehicle.

DORIS

Mailman!! You want my tomato?!

Lonely Doris watches the truck drive away.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - SUNBAR COUNTY - DAY

Pete's mail truck zigzags through the forest, where he drops mail at rustic homes.

INT/EXT. MAIL TRUCK - PRISON GUARD HOUSE - DAY

The mail truck approaches a prison guard house then stops. A GATE GUARD blocks the fenced gate.

GATE GUARD

Please take out and present your I.D..

Pete hands him a PAPER and DRIVER'S LICENSE.

PETE

Just moved to Sunbar County. I'm Pete.

GATE GUARD

Follow that road to our mail door.

The guard buzzes open the gate. Pete drives, then stops at the prison mail door, exits his truck, opens the truck back, removes a large CLOTH BAG, is met by a short MAIL GUARD with a GUN.

MAIL GUARD

Just drop it there! Wait for our bag!

An OBESE PRISONER in an orange jumpsuit carries out a heavy CLOTH BAG. Hiding behind him are two other prisoners, one unseen and MIKE (50, rough) who kicks the guard, wrestles for his gun. TOWER GUARDS shoot bullets. Pete runs to his truck and drives away, escaping the YELLING and SHOOTING.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY

Pete's mail truck speeds past more forest.

INT/EXT. MAIL TRUCK - FOREST - DAY

Panicked, Pete dials his cell phone.

PETE

(into phone)

Babe! I almost got killed! Prisoners tried to escape!

PETE'S WIFE (O.S.)

Oh no! Are you all right??

Hidden in the back of his truck: Mike and Cody, whispering.

MIKE

When he stops, I strangle him.

CODY

Why kill him?

MIKE

Why not?

EXT. MAIL TRUCK - RUSTIC CABIN - MINUTES LATER

Pete opens the back of the truck, grabs mail, not seeing Cody and Mike hiding behind BOXES. Mike quietly grabs a TIRE JACK to aim at Pete, but Cody stops him. Unaware, Pete

walks past a CLOTHESLINE to deliver mail to a rustic cabin. Cody quietly jumps out of the truck, pulling Mike with him, behind bushes. Pete returns to his truck and drives away.

MIKE

Place looks abandoned. I'm going in.

Mike breaks into the rustic cabin. In the bushes, Cody removes his prison jumpsuit and undresses to his underwear which has a PAPER tucked in it. He steals from the clothesline JEANS, a BLUE SHIRT and a KNAPSACK. He ducks, hearing a POLICE CAR with SIREN speed past.

EXT. ROAD - FOREST - MINUTES LATER

TWO POLICEMEN search Pete's truck but not finding anything, they allow him to drive away.

EXT. SHACK - FOREST - DAY

On top a tall LADDER, Doris slops vibrant blue paint on her dilapidated shack exterior. The fierce wind rocks the ladder and bleeds the paint on the window, on her dress, on her face. She doesn't see approaching Cody, holding up loose jeans way too big, his muscular pecs busting out of the shirt way too small, a denim knapsack on his back. His hands steady the shaking ladder. She looks down, SCREAMS.

DORIS

Ahhhh! Stop shaking my ladder!

CODY

Ma'am, I'm stopping it from shaking.

She climbs down. To help, he takes the paint can.

DORIS

Who in God's circus are you?

CODY

I'm ... Cody. Who are you?

DORIS

I'm a model. Doris Adelson. Did the agency send you?

CODY

What agency?

DORIS

The modeling agency, you crack addict!

She swivels, turns, tries to pose seductively. He takes in her insanity, and the disheveled shack. She sashays away like a runway model, turns, sashays back.

CODY

Any other models here besides us?

DORIS

Why do you want to know?

CODY

Just curious.

DORIS

Of course you are. Curious to see how Doris Adelson lives. Normally, my bodyguards would throw you out! But since they're sailing the Antarctic to find me treasures, follow me inside.

He's hesitant ... but does.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SHACK - SAME

Cody follows Doris as she poses like a Price Is Right model next to a dated recliner, then a ripped couch, then a fireplace mantel with her tomato and an AXE, then an old armoire. She opens it, smiles, revealing a very old tv.

CODY

Wow, that TV is about forty years old. You're in your whole little world out here, aren't you? Away from everything ... Nobody knows you're way out here?

She tiptoes to the window, peeks out.

DORIS

Of course they know! Paparazzi hide in the bushes! Hounding me for magazine covers. International.

CODY

Sure, but except for paparazzi, you can hide out here, safe from the world, huh?

He inhales deep, exhales, relaxes on the sofa, grins. Until she picks up the AXE. He cowers. She comes at him - but merely grabs his hand. He shakes it away, which angers her.

CODY (CONT'D)

How about putting the axe down?

With axe, she exits to kitchen. He doesn't know what to do.

KITCHEN

SOUND OF AXING. Cody peeks in to see Doris axe the ice in her freezer to pull out PORK CHOPS.

DORIS

I'm not gonna pretend to you that I have a fireman upstairs in my bedroom waiting to take me to prom. I'm uninvolved at the present time. You can call me Dor or Doris. I'll call you Brown Eyes.

CODY

Deal.

LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Cody eats. Doris's teeth rip into the fried pork chop.

CODY

You're a good cook.

DORIS

Betsy can't cook for you.

CODY

Betsy?

DORIS

Betsy Webber, only chubby cheerleader at Sunbar High. I have a xylophone if you want music.

She smiles (missing teeth) and gestures to a XYLOPHONE.

CODY

How far away is the city?

DORIS
A twenty minute drive.

CODY
Not by car. I mean jogging.

DORIS
You want the coyotes to eat your nose?
They ate Jon Junior's nose.

EXT. GARDEN - DUSK - MINUTES LATER

Doris shows Cody a ripped (sewn) scarecrow nose.

DORIS
Jon Junior sung something to piss off
the coyotes. Coyotes hate lyrics that
rhyme. Try not to rhyme around coyotes.

Cody touches the scarecrow's hand-stitched face.

CODY
You sewed a scarecrow face?

DORIS
I can sew anything. Maybe tomorrow I'll
take in those loose clown pants for you
and let out your shirt. You shrunk your
shirt by washing in hot water. You
don't know anything. No man does.

He shrugs. She leads him to a scarecrow in a business suit,
with a different hand-stitched face, lying in the garden.

DORIS (CONT'D)
Paul Junior was my first husband.
That's Sal Junior over there. David
Junior's across the garden.

CODY
You did all this? By yourself?

DORIS
Gypsy Mother lends a hand.

CODY
Your mother lives here?

DORIS

She's passed on to a higher place. Same as the vegetarian dinosaurs. Dead alcoholics, the whole lot, risen to a better place.

She points to the three-quarter moon, has a mood swing.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Isn't it the prettiest moon that was ever invented? You can sleep in my bed with me.

CODY

Oh. Gee. Thanks. Yeah guess I shouldn't jog home in the dark with rhyme-phobic coyotes out there. Maybe I could sleep ... on your porch bench?

DORIS

There's a greater chance of your wish coming true if you wish on a three-quarter moon.

CODY

Dear three-quarter moon, can I sleep on the porch?

DORIS

I think that was a yes. I'll go get you a pillow and blanket.

EXT. PORCH - SHACK - LATER THAT NIGHT

Cody sleeps on the porch bench under a blanket. In the dark, a frightening shadow overtakes him. It's Doris, studying him. Slowly she touches his sleeping face, then his hand, gently, then as gently, she removes his shirt. Hesitantly she removes his pants. She grips his underwear, drools ... but decides not to remove those.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SHACK - MINUTES LATER

Doris quietly searches his knapsack by candlelight. She pulls out the old paper and reads it.

DORIS (CONT'D)

"I can't get a hold of you from prison,
and if I could, would you still be
twenty-two? Making my motorcycle do
circles in Motel Eight parking lots?"

The paper has a drawing of a pretty blonde, titled "Marie."

Doris tucks the paper back in the knapsack.

EXT. VICTORIAN MANOR - NIGHT

Gorgeous beach, gorgeous home. One light on inside.

INT. BEDROOM - VICTORIAN MANOR - NIGHT - SAME

In bed, sexy Lilith fingers Jon's chest, who swats her hand.

JON

Stop it.

She pulls her hand back ... deliberates.

LILITH

Paying for this home, and Doris, is too
much pressure on you, Jon. There's a
position open at Neiman-Marcus --

JON

You ain't getting no job.

LILITH

But it's not fair to you that I'm so
dependent on you.

He slaps her face hard. She covers her face, CRIES.

JON

I make the decisions 'round here!

She wriggles out of bed and shuffles to the bathroom.

BATHROOM

She stares into a mirror at her swelling cheek, takes a deep
breath, then circles both her index fingers around both her
eyes and concentrates as if it's an occult ritual.

LILITH

My one wish ... is he could never hit me again. Not ever again. My one wish.

EXT/INT. VICTORIAN MANOR - BEACH - MORNING

Jon leaves for work, passing Pete. Lilith opens the door and waits for Pete to approach. He hands her a LETTER.

LILITH

Good morning. You need to come in for sweet tea. Sugar is energy.

PETE

Wish I had time but I have to get on with my ruute [route]. Have a good day.

LILITH

"Ruute?" In North Carolina, we pronounce it "rowt." I'm rather an expert on accents. Say "Your skin's like porcelain, Lilith."

PETE

Your skin's like porcelain.

LILITH

A Midwest farm boy.

PETE

You're right.

LILITH

I had a lover from Michigan.

PETE

That's where I'm from.

LILITH

You Michigan men know how to ... give tender massages. And ... receive them.

Her robe slightly opens. He leaves.

LILITH (CONT'D)

I was making perfectly polite conversation!

PETE

I'm married!

LILITH

I am as well! How dare you!

She slams the door and takes her mail inside, humiliated.

EXT. PORCH - SHACK - MORNING

Cody wakes, freezing, surprised to be in his underwear. He walks to see Doris atop her ladder. She wears a halter and skirt made of paper towels and duct tape. It isn't pretty.

CODY

Jesus. What is she wearing?

She paints free-form swirls on her shack, painting over flies, leaves, caterpillars. He looks stupefied at her overly made-up face with giant high eyebrows.

CODY (CONT'D)

I don't remember where I put my clothes!

DORIS

I sewed your shirt bigger and your pants smaller! Try 'em on!

She points to where they are. He dresses as she comes down.

CODY

They do fit better. Thanks.

DORIS

Got waffles warming for us in my stove.

CODY

Nice. Thanks. Did I tell you I'm a banker? With your bank, by the way.

DORIS

I don't have a bank.

She takes a LEMON SLICE from a stair and squeezes it onto her hair, winks.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Should I lighten my hair for a change?

CODY

A lot of people keep money under their mattresses but you should let me put your money in the bank's safe.

DORIS

Do you have a girlfriend?

CODY

No.

DORIS

Were you ever touchy-feely on Betsy Webber?

CODY

Do you want me to have been?

DORIS

Betsy Webber's the only cheerleader that went for boys in bad clothes. She's a smoker. She's done evil things with truckers for a couple Viceroy's. Don't even get me started on what she did with her mouth to a football player for half a bag of Doritos.

She enters her house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SHACK - MINUTES LATER

Cody follows Doris inside. He opens and inspects the armoire. Between jars of buttons and sewing needles there's a framed PHOTO of a gypsy mother and 2 girls (Lilith, 14 and Doris, 2).

DORIS

You like blonde girls.

CODY

Blonde girls? What do you mean?

She kisses her GYPSY TAROT CARDS on the mantel. The sun's rays shimmer on the CRYSTALS alongside them.

DORIS

Your last girlfriend was blonde.

CODY

Wow. Yeah. Oh, are you one of those gypsies or fortune tellers that this town is famous for? Or a witch?

She shrugs, twirls to the kitchen. He hesitantly follows.

KITCHEN

Doris and Cody finish their waffles. An old PHONE on the wall RINGS.

CODY

Who's calling you?

DORIS

It's a wrong number.

CODY

How do you know that?

DORIS

I'm psychic. Do you like my forks?

He admires the pewter Civil War forks (the ones missing from Lilith's set).

CODY

Sure. Nice old forks.

DORIS

"Nice?" "Old?" They are antique treasures. One hundred and forty years old. Each fork is worth a thousand dollars. I got painting to do.

Doris rises and shimmies toward the door. RING.

CODY

Doris. Forget Betsy Webber. Now that I know she smokes I'm over that slut.

He winks at her. She contains her joy, exits. He studies the forks, then searches all the cabinets and COOKIE JARS for other loot - to no avail.

SOUND OF A CAR. Cody peeks through the kitchen window to see a COP CAR slow down ... then ... park.

Cody looks scared, takes his knapsack, opens a door (next to the refrigerator), and ducks into the basement.

BASEMENT

An old washer and dryer on one side. A ripped couch under a high window on the other. Cody lies on the couch, twists his face into the warm ray of sunlight.

CODY

Nice! A basement with sun.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Cody shivers in his cold prison cell.

CODY

I'm going to freeze to death!

SAL (O.S.)

Good. Killers should freeze.

FLASH-FORWARD:

INT/EXT. SHACK - DAY - NOON

A YOUNG COP knocks on the door. Doris opens it.

DORIS

What you want? My TV too loud!? It's not even on, you hypochondriac!

YOUNG COP

Anyone else here?

DORIS

My bodyguards are at the North Pole ...
Now are you and I going bowling or not?

He takes in her crazy make-up and heaving bosom, peeks inside, then walks back to his car.

DORIS (CONT'D)

You cops hear loud music! You're crazy!

She slams the door, then sees Cody entering the kitchen. She curtsies, smiles. He grabs a KNIFE, picks his teeth.

CODY

Who was at the door?

DORIS

Some cop. Can't bowl worth shit.

CODY

What did he want?

DORIS

Me to turn the TV down! But it's not even on! See how they make trouble?!

The phone RINGS. She ignores it. RING.

INT. DINING ROOM - VICTORIAN MANOR - SAME

Lilith, in peach pantsuit, finishes setting the formal table. Her neck holds the ringing iPhone, her fingers straighten her Civil War place settings. (The only thing missing are the forks. The latest bad copies serve as entrée forks).

Jon, suspicious, sneaks up behind her and grabs the phone.

JON

Who you talkin' to?

LILITH

I was calling Doris.

DOORBELL RINGS. Lilith welcomes in SIX SOCIETY WOMEN. If there's anyone middle-age who's thinner and prettier than Lilith, it's haughty MARY-ELLEN (60).

JON

Mary-Ellen! Prettiest lady in Sunbar.

MARY-ELLEN

Says the hottest cop in North Carolina.

JON

If you wasn't married to my best friend.

MARY-ELLEN

If you weren't married to my best friend.

They CHUCKLE, cheek-kiss. Mary-Ellen hugs Lilith.

MARY-ELLEN (CONT'D)

Lilith, did you put on weight?

LILITH

I don't think so. Have I really?

JON

She packed on a bit.

MARY-ELLEN

Or it might be the peach color.

LILITH

I suppose I do usually wear darker colors. Maroons, pecans, royal blues.

Jon leads them into the dining room. The heaviest woman, BETSY WEBBER (50) rolls her eyes at Mary-Ellen's back.

BETSY

(whispers to Lilith)

You're prettier than her in every color.

Lilith hugs her in gratitude, nearly in tears.

LILITH

Betsy Webber, what would I do without you?

BETSY

No reason to ever think about it. I'm always here for you, Lil. Lunch smells terrific!

WOMAN GUEST #1

What an amazing home you have.

LILITH

Thank you! Please be seated. Sit.

BETSY

The table's up to par, Lil. The Women's Society is never coming to my place, that's for darn sure.

They sit. Betsy whips out a VICEROY. Jon lights it.

WOMAN GUEST #1

Heavens glory! Is this the antique silverware I've been dying to see?

MARY-ELLEN

It is. The Civil War set, except for the forks.

Mary-Ellen examines the new fork, grimaces.

WOMAN GUEST #2

What happened to the forks?

JON

(lying)

Lilith ain't unpacked them.

MARY-ELLEN

(to Lilith)

What do you do with all your time?

(to the guests)

She only volunteers a few hours a week at the charity bakery.

JON

No wife of mine needs a job. Real estate been very good to me.

WOMAN-GUEST #1

So nice to meet people of standard.

MARY-ELLEN

We feel the same way about you, ladies.

JON

Now get the salmon, Lil. Ladies, you're gonna love it if Lil didn't burn it.

Lilith walks toward the kitchen, turns back, sees Jon secretly stroking Mary-Ellen's leg under the table.

KITCHEN

Destroyed, Lilith vomits in the sink. Dizzy, she forces herself to put the salmon on a platter.

EXT. GARDEN - SHACK - MINUTES LATER

Doris's hand covers the eyes of the scarecrow.

DORIS
Stop. Staring. At. Me.

Cody, with scary knife and his knapsack, enters the garden.

CODY
Phone keeps ringing. Who is calling?

DORIS
Wrong number.

CODY
I gotta go. Gotta get to town and find
someone who can pay a handyman.

DORIS
You can stay here for free.

CODY
I need fifty bucks to catch a train out
of state. No one around here will pick
up a hitchhiker.

DORIS
Not with a prison up the road and a
forest full of warlocks! See how
crooked my house is getting?

CODY
Yeah.

DORIS
So I'm making it straighter.

CODY
By painting sections?

DORIS
You don't notice it's leaning when
there are swirls.

CODY
Gotcha.

DORIS
But I need to swirl three more sides.
You help swirl for a day or two and I
can fix to pay you for it.

She sashay-walk toward the house. He follows.

DORIS (CONT'D)

So you need fifty dollars for a week's painting?

CODY

For one day. I'm only staying one day. I hike out in the morning.

DORIS

Ten dollars a day. I hardly have any money at all.

CODY

Aw come on. You said those forks are worth a fortune.

DORIS

Five dollars an hour.

CODY

Minimum wage is way more.

DORIS

Ten dollars an hour.

CODY

Sold. Now what are you gonna fix your painter man for dinner?

DORIS

It'll be a surprise.

She takes the knife, swishes inside. He drops his bag then inches the ladder to the side of the house, picks up the paint can and climbs the ladder, to the very top - then risks his life turning around, no hands on the ladder.

CODY'S POV: miles of forest tree tops.

Upset, he closes his eyes, as if to jump to his death.

CODY

None of this means anything without you, Marie.

The ladder shakes. He opens his eyes, looks down to see Mike, rushes down to whisper.

CODY (CONT'D)

Mike? What are you doing here?!

MIKE

You get hired to paint?

CODY

Yes. But she can't see you.

MIKE

She didn't see me, you think I'm a fool?

CODY

Only met you the day we escaped, but no, you're certainly no fool. Mike, you have to go somewhere else.

MIKE

Relax, asshole. I'm not gonna ruin your mark. Just offering to go partners.

CODY

No, sorry. I got this by myself.

Mike nods, punches Cody in the gut, then marches off.

INT. KITCHEN - SHACK - DAY - SAME

Doris dances in robe and oven mitts as she makes a cake.

BEDROOM

In her bedroom, Doris applies more Baby-Jane Hudson make-up, sews a see-through dress of many torn pairs of pantyhose.

EXT. SIDE OF SHACK - DUSK

Shirtless tanned Cody stands on the ladder, paint brush in hand. Doris appears in her see-through hose dress.

DORIS

Look what you did!! I've never seen anything this glorious!

CODY

My back is killing me.

He comes down the ladder.

DORIS

Now let's head inside. I got the heater
on in the kitchen.

He throws on his shirt and follows her.

DORIS (CONT'D)

You can keep your shirt off, Cody.
(mood swing)

I said the heater is on!

CODY

No, I'll keep my shirt on.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SHACK - MINUTES LATER

Cody opens the armoire and studies the photo.

CODY

Who are these people in the photo?

DORIS

I'm the baby. Gypsy Mother is giving me
and my sister an anti-flu potion. Gypsy
Mother died a week later.

CODY

Sorry.

DORIS

She wasn't my birth-mother if you need
to know. She was a waitress at the
Civil War Dining Club which burned down
forty years ago. Old bag was half deaf.

CODY

I would think it would make it hard to
be a waitress if you can't hear.

DORIS

She got a lot of complaints.

CODY

Ya gotta hand it to her for trying.

DORIS

Some waitresses are real good at taking orders. Some waitresses are better at taking silverware.

CODY

She took the silverware?

DORIS

She stole the Civil War cutlery a piece at a time before I even grew out of the garden.

CODY

You grew out of the garden?

DORIS

Exactly by the dead oak tree.

CODY

You grew out of the garden? You weren't born like the rest of us humans?

DORIS

Why should I care what you believe?! Ask Gypsy Mother if she didn't find me growing out of the soil, my face like a rose! If she was alive, she'd tell ya. Stinking of whiskey. God killed off Gypsy Mother when I was two, and feeling rightfully guilty about it, God gave me the stolen dinner forks.

CODY

Thanks for clearing things up.

DORIS

My bossy sister didn't get the forks.

CODY

Your sister?

DORIS

Lilith visits me but. She's. Boring.

CODY

When's the last time you had a visitor?

DORIS
Brown Eyes, it's been toooo long.

CODY
Well, tonight you have one.

KITCHEN

Cody sits as Doris puts the sliced tomato and a cake on the table.

DORIS
Take off your shirt. The heat's on.

CODY
I'll keep it on. You made me a cake.
You're a dream come true.

Doris glows. Cody wolfs down a piece.

DORIS
Wash it down with this.

She pours him a glass of BOX WINE, which he chugs.

CODY
That's so good! I haven't had wine in
... ten years.

DORIS
Now do you want to take off your shirt?

CODY
I'll leave it on.

She gives him MONEY.

DORIS
Four hours. Forty dollars.

CODY
Thank you.

DORIS
There's more swirls to do tomorrow.

CODY
Think I'll leave the second the sun
rises though.

DORIS

Don't you need more money for the train?

CODY

Ten bucks more.

DORIS

Then you have to stay tomorrow.

CODY

I'll paint another hour after supper.

DORIS

You can't paint in the dark.

CODY

Why not?

DORIS

If you paint in the dark the swirls will become circles. Circles won't make the house any straighter, will they?

CODY

I promise they'll be swirls.

DORIS

I can't have you ruining my property.

CODY

I promise they'll be swirls.

DORIS

No, you have to do it tomorrow. Eat more cake. The burgers are almost done.

He eats more cake. Suddenly she's angry.

DORIS (CONT'D)

If it's hot, you take off your shirt!

CODY

Again?? Hm ... Will you give me ten bucks ... to take off my shirt?

DORIS

You want me to pay you to take off your shirt?

CODY

That's right. I want ten bucks if you want me to eat with my shirt off.

She sets down the BURGERS, sits.

DORIS

Five.

CODY

Okay. Five.

He takes his shirt off, drinks some wine.

DORIS

You have so many muscles, look at you!

CODY

I had plenty of time to lift weights.

She touches his shoulder.

CODY (CONT'D)

No touching.

DORIS

Your chest muscles. I should touch them. You still need five bucks for the train.

CODY

No way. No. No touching. I'm sorry.

DORIS

I can massage your sore muscles.

CODY

Not into it.

DORIS

You need five dollars. Let me kiss you.

CODY

No, nope, thanks.

DORIS

You're mean and horrible to me!

CODY

No kiss.

DORIS
For money? For five dollars?

CODY
No kiss ... You want to ... see me ...
naked, Doris?

DORIS
Naked?

CODY
You want me to eat naked? I will for
only five bucks.

DORIS
That means you won't be staying
tomorrow?

He nods and undresses to his underwear.

CODY
Do you want to see the rest?

DORIS
(frightened)
I never saw a man naked.

CODY
You must've seen photos.

DORIS
I don't have the internet yet.

CODY
Well then, if I were you, I'd want me
to take off my underwear.

She rises, overwhelmed, paces, turns to him.

DORIS
Yes, take down. Your. Underpants.

CODY
Go get me my money first.

He eats. She opens the cupboard, grabs a COFFEE CAN,
shakes it. A lot of CHANGE falls out. She gives it to him.

CODY (CONT'D)

That brings me to fifty dollars and
sixty-three cents.

He puts it and the rest of the money in his knapsack, then removes his underwear, stands naked in his socks. He lets her take a long look, then slowly removes each sock. He is studying her as much as she is studying him. After a long while, he sits, drops his head in his hands.

CODY (CONT'D)

You're like a little kid. So innocent
... What did I do?!

He reaches into his knapsack and removes a few of her Civil War forks and one crystal.

CODY (CONT'D)

You're too innocent.

DORIS

Everything I care about.

She empties his bag. He grabs his paper about Marie.

CODY

I'm pitiful just like you. You show me what happens when someone is alone too long. I've had this with me for too many years. I just can't let go. I'll try to let go.

He burns the paper over the candle, then rises.

CODY (CONT'D)

I need to get out of here.

He reaches for his clothes but she wrestles them away from him. He aims for the door, shivers. She follows, panicked.

DORIS

You're going to town to meet Marie?

CODY

Marie?! How'd you know her name?

DORIS

Ah ... I'm psychic. A gypsy raised me for crying out loud.

CODY

What else do you know?

DORIS

My crystals see everything. I know
everything in the world.

CODY

Can you get in touch with Marie for me?

DORIS

Maybe. Probably. Yes. Go get firewood.

EXT. SHACK - NIGHT - MINUTES LATER

Cold, naked Cody gathers wood. He doesn't see a powder blue convertible MERCEDES parked in the driveway, with a Louis Vuitton SUITCASE on the hood. Lilith watches him from the shadows, a BAG OF GROCERIES getting heavy in her arms. Startled, Cody jumps, then covers his genitals.

CODY

Where did you come from?

LILITH

I happen to be this lady's sister! And
who in God's circus are you?!

CODY

From the photo? The blonde kid?

LILITH

What photograph is she showing to
strangers?! And you would be??

CODY

Cody. Were you the one who kept calling
on the phone?

LILITH

I don't believe my sister has mentioned
a naked man named Cody.

CODY

I was helping her paint the house ...
she paid me to eat naked.

Lilith storms in the shack. He shivers outside, confused.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SHACK - MINUTES LATER

Grocery bag in her arms, Lilith searches the coffee table and mantel.

LILITH

Doris?? Where are you?? Are you okay?!
Where's that old photo? Doris, this is
not a hotel for naked men!

Doris sips wine, poses.

DORIS

I am entertaining!

Lilith trades the groceries for the wine, then drinks.

LILITH

You certainly are. Did you pay that man
to remove his clothing?

DORIS

He's not dangerous.

LILITH

There is nothing more dangerous than a
naked man!

KITCHEN

Lilith opens the fridge, tosses out MOLDED FOOD.

LILITH

What in heaven's name are you wearing?

DORIS

Your old pantyhose. They asked me to
pose on the cover of Vogue in this.

Doris puts away groceries. Lilith opens the freezer.

LILITH

Where in heaven's name is my vodka?

DORIS

You drank it last week.

LILITH

Go upstairs and change into something respectful. Where is that old photo?

DORIS

You can't take away that one last photo from me. I need to look at us when I get lonely.

LILITH

That indecently exposed man out there knows I'm almost a dozen years older than you are. That's not how I like to present myself, is it? No it is not. Where is that photo?

DORIS

I don't know.

LILITH

Go up and change. Scoot.

DORIS

He's mine.

LILITH

Scoot! As if I would give him the time of day. Go change. Scoot it!

Doris exits upstairs. Lilith sneaks a peek into the silverware drawer, relieved to see the Civil War forks.

LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Lilith sits on the couch, sips wine, sneaks off her wedding ring, pockets it. Clothed Cody enters, starts a fire.

CODY

I hate being cold... Nothing happened between your sister and me.

LILITH

How do I know that's true?

CODY

What do you think I did? Rape her or something?

LILITH

I was raped when I was very young.

CODY

I'm sorry to hear that.

LILITH

I was raped again last year.

CODY

I'm sorry. But I didn't rape Doris.

LILITH

When we catch the man who raped me last year he'll never see a day outside bars again, I give you my promise. Why was Doris dressed like that?

CODY

Why does she talk to scarecrows?

LILITH

When mama found Doris, Doris was short on oxygen. Her brain might have collapsed? I don't know such truth. She's as "special" as they make 'em.

Doris enters in her same outfit, does a runway turn.

LILITH (CONT'D)

I told you look ridiculous in that.
Go put on something normal.

DORIS

You hate how pretty I am.
(to Cody)
And Lilith hates my fashion flair!

LILITH

Go up and change this instant! Scoot!

Doris twirls, then goes upstairs. Lilith GIGGLES. Cody CHUCKLES, sits by the fireplace, stares into the fire.

LILITH (CONT'D)

Sit yourself down. Over here by me.

CODY

I can think of worse things.

Eye contact. Chemistry. He sits by her.

LILITH

Why didn't she answer the phone? She always answers the phone on Fridays to let me know what she needs at the grocery store.

He shrugs. She hammers her finger on his muscular chest.

LILITH (CONT'D)

She can't fend for herself against intruders. Your welcome has expired. Go on and disappear! Scoot scoot!

CODY

Doris and I have some unfinished business.

He puts his hand over her finger on his chest.

LILITH

And exactly what business is that?

CODY

An old friend ... She is going to contact an old friend for me.

They lock eyes, fighting attraction.

LILITH

Scoot scoot scoot! Go on and disappear.

CODY

Tell her I'll be back another time.

She pushes him out the door.

LILITH

If you dare, I'll be waiting right here for you, with my rifle. Go on. Scoot!

He smiles at her beauty. She smiles at his.

LILITH (CONT'D)

Oh - Just a wild forsaken minute! You're not going anywhere until I figure out exactly what happened here.

CODY

Should I go? Or stay?

LILITH

Sit your cute butt down and pour me another glass of wine. And one for you. I suppose I can figure to give you a ride to town in the morning.

They sit. Chemistry. Doris enters, notices, jealous.

DORIS

Lilith, your doctor called about your body lice medicine.

LILITH

Stop making stories, honey. That's not nice. Why would my doctor phone here?

CODY

Lilith, you got a cigarette?

LILITH

Do my lips look wrinkled like I smoke??

DORIS

I'll change the sheets upstairs for you and me, Cody.

LILITH

This intruder will sleep on the porch!

CODY

How about the couch in the basement?

LILITH

You can sleep outside! On the porch!

DORIS

Cody can sleep in the basement!

Lilith searches her purse, finds one ELECTRONIC CIGARETTE. Cody reaches for it. Lilith shares it with him as they fight the sexual chemistry between them.

LILITH

I was wondering if I could borrow the Civil War forks, Doris?

DORIS

Those forks are mine! They're all I
have from Gypsy Mother!

LILITH

Blah blah blah. Stop your hollering.

DORIS

All smokers aren't going to Hell, Cody.
Only Viceroy smokers like Betsy Webber.
E-cigarette smokers got a shot at
purgatory.

Cody thumbs-up. Lilith GIGGLES at him.

CODY

(to Lilith)

You smell like a movie-star.

LILITH

Have you smelt many?

CODY

It was a compliment.

DORIS

What do you think of my perfume?

CODY

Nothing wrong with tangerine, Doris.

DORIS

Lilith, bring me some of your fancy
perfume next time.

LILITH

Oh honey, citrus is lovely on you.

DORIS

You're not sleeping in the basement
with Brown Eyes.

LILITH

Annihilate the thought.

DORIS

You're sleeping upstairs with me or do
I have to call Jon?

CODY

Who's Jon?

LILITH

Jon is no one. Doris, I'm so looking forward to sleeping right beside you, like kittens! But first I need a big welcome-to-Dorisland cocktail. Cody, would you be kind enough to check my glove compartment to see if there's a real cigarette and a vodka flask?

EXT. SHACK - MINUTES LATER

Cody walks to the Mercedes, sees the keys in the ignition! He wonders if he should steal it. He nervously glances back to the kitchen window, then looks to the clouds.

CODY

I can't go. I have to hear from you, Marie. I have to know if you forgive me. Speak to me - through Doris, okay?

INT. KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Cody hands a FLASK to Lilith.

CODY

No smokes in your car. Where's Doris?

LILITH

I snuck an Ambien in her drink and sent her to bed.

CODY

Careful. The dinosaurs went alcoholic.

LILITH

Don't I know it. Won't you join me?

She pours two glasses of vodka then turns to give him one but he's gone. She tiptoes to the basement door, making sure Doris isn't watching, twists the knob.

LILITH (CONT'D)

Cody? Sugar? This will help you sleep.

It is locked. Her lonely eyes stare into her drink.

BASEMENT

Cody tosses on the couch, remembering:

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT - MOTEL 6 PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Cody drives a motorcycle on one wheel to impress MARIE (22, blonde), sitting behind him, holding onto him for dear life.

FLASH-FORWARD:

INT. BEDROOM - SHACK - NIGHT

Lilith sleeps. Next to her, Doris sneaks out of bed.

KITCHEN

Doris tiptoes to the kitchen, gets SCIZZORS, then twists the basement doorknob. Finding it locked, she takes the KEY from a drawer.

BASEMENT

Holding scissors like a killer, Doris tiptoes down the basement stairs, watches Cody sleep ... then inches the scissors to his face - only to cut a lock of his hair.

DISSOLVE INTO:

KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Lilith and Doris eat breakfast.

DORIS

I'll wake Cody.

LILITH

Let the poor man sleep.

DORIS

He's mine.

LILITH

I'm not after that piece of trash and you keep your distance from him. He's angling for something. Cheap men can be very expensive, darling.

Cody opens the basement door, then kisses Doris! Cody and Doris MOAN passionately as they French-kiss!

THAT WAS A DREAM. WHAT REALLY HAPPENS THAT MORNING:

BASEMENT - MORNING

Cody wakes from that nightmare. He dresses, walks up the stairs, opens the door.

KITCHEN

Cody enters to find Lilith sitting at the table, eating. He smiles, already in love with her. She smiles, already in love with him, and points to a PANCAKE PLATE.

CODY

For me?

LILITH

I'm no gourmet. It's only a pancake.

He sits.

CODY

Have to warn you ... I have a knack for sniffing out arsenic.

LILITH

And an immunity by now, I'm certain.

He takes a bite, staring into her beautiful eyes.

CODY

I hate being cold. Let's go in the sun.

LILITH

Not on your life. I despise the sun.

He rolls his eyes, exits with his plate.

EXT. SHACK - MINUTES LATER

Cody sits by the axe buried in the woodpile, eats. Lilith creeps out with her plate and sits next to him. She may hate the sun but she's sexy in it.

LILITH

It's almost noon.

CODY

Is she in her garden?

LILITH

She is not. She's nowhere to be seen.

Lilith takes his hand. He thinks she wants to hold it and he kisses it, but she sets it over her eyes to block sun.

LILITH (CONT'D)

Doris is wrinkling like a prune. That's exactly why she plasters herself with cheap make-up. Who'd ever believe I was the older sister? My skin is like porcelain, in fact the mailman told it was just yesterday morning.

He takes back his hand and eats, looks around.

CODY

Your car's gone!

LILITH

Not to despair. I'm certain Doris has saved up an errand or two.

Two police cars pass! Lilith hides her face from them. Cody does, too. Awkward silence. Then Cody rises, paces.

CODY

Sheriff station up ahead?

LILITH

Why are you so interested?

CODY

You and your mother lived alone here?

LILITH

That's correct. Until Doris.

CODY

Your mother found Doris by the oak tree?

LILITH

Many many many years ago.

CODY

Your mother was half-deaf? How could she find a baby in the middle of the night if she couldn't hear it crying?

LILITH

Shouldn't I be asking the questions? It's a good thing I came by when I did.

CODY

I think it is, too.

LILITH

I do not have body lice.

CODY

I didn't think you did.

LILITH

She was a few hours old.

CODY

It doesn't make sense. There are no other houses for miles. Why would somebody come all the way here and dump her fifty feet from your house? If they wanted her to die they had miles of woods to dump her. If they wanted her to live, they'd put her on your porch.

She shuts him up with a quick kiss.

CODY (CONT'D)

You're gorgeous. So what is it?

LILITH

I'm not following your riddles.

CODY

Do you talk to scarecrows, too? That why you aren't married?

She slowly pulls out her wedding ring from her pocket.

LILITH

The ring's on probation.

She steals part of his pancake. He notices her arm bruise.

CODY

Did he do that to you?

LILITH

No ... No, of course he didn't.

EXT. SUNBAR STRIP MALL - DAY

Doris, in Baby Jane Hudson make-up and ratty outdated long coat, exits the Mercedes.

INT. TARGET - MINUTES LATER

Doris runway-sashays to a door reading "Management." A couple crosses her eye-line. It is Pete and Pete's wife. He models a black shirt from the rack. His wife buttons it. Pete kisses her.

DORIS

Hey aren't you the mailman?

PETE

I am. Oh, you live in that old shack?

PETE'S WIFE

Hi there, I'm Pete's wife.

DORIS

Pete never said he was married. He just lead me on, flirting with his eyes. I told Pete I already have a man. I've got clips of Cody's hair taped to my heart. It's heart-guaranteed.

Doris opens her coat to show a low-cut aluminum foil dress and Cody's hair taped to her cleavage. She grabs a similar black shirt from the rack and brings it to the counter.

PETE'S WIFE

(whispers to Pete)

This town is crazy. Oh, what was that other old wives' tale? Sunbar County females get one wish, they circle at their eyes, and make a wish. One per lifetime.

She GIGGLES and circles both index fingers at her own eyes.

PETE'S WIFE (CONT'D)

I wish ... I wish that crazy lady would slap her own face. Ten times.

Doris doesn't slap herself.

PETE'S WIFE (CONT'D)

It was worth a try.

They CHUCKLE. The clerk (DINA, 17, wearing nametag) scans her iPhone, speaks to Doris.

DINA

You can pay for that in the men's section.

DORIS

I can pay for it at any register. I know the rules, you alcoholic. You don't think I know the rules?

(reading her nametag)

Dina.

DINA

My mistake. Why don't I total that up and we can get on with our day?

DORIS

I can't afford this now. Never mind. Can I put it on layaway?

DINA

It'll require a deposit.

DORIS

Then I can't afford it. I need some free perfume samples.

Dina throws a few perfume samples in a bag.

DORIS (CONT'D)

I see the price of taffy has skyrocketed in ten years. Does the attendant know not to use the same scoop on different candies?

DINA

We beat him senseless if he doesn't.

DORIS

My fiancé and I will be looking for rings soon. Is the employee discount still thirty percent?

DINA

Twenty. You're not an employee, are you?

DORIS

I used to be about ten years ago.

FLASHBACK:

INT. TARGET - DAY - A DECADE AGO

Doris, ten years younger, works the register. The management door opens and a big-nosed gentleman in bifocals (ROY, 50) exits, giving her the slightest smile.

Doris brings a VALENTINES CARD and CANDY BOX to Roy ... but he ignores her and instead hugs BETSY WEBBER, who brings him a PRESENT. Doris is heartbroken.

ROY

Here's your gift, Betsy.

Roy reveals a CARD and DORITOS. Betsy PURRS sexually.

FLASH-FORWARD:

INT. TARGET - DAY

Dina waves the Target bag across Doris' eye-line.

DORIS

Employee? I used to be about ten years ago and I'm thinking of coming back.

DINA

Oh goodie.

Doris checks her make-up in the chrome register - and - in the distortion she does look fabulous.

DINA (CONT'D)

You can go away now.

DORIS

That blouse you're wearing isn't even for sale here. What is it? Walmart? Dina! Only wear clothes that are available here in case a customer wants to dress like you. They worship us.

Doris grabs a blouse off a rack and hands it to Dina.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Here! Wear this. Carry an extra sandwich in case Roy asks you to stay late but never bring tuna fish or barbecue chicken because it gets too damn messy. Oh, I'll need you to drive me to work every day. Make a note.

Doris turns and runway-sashays to the "Management" door.

MANAGEMENT OFFICES

Doris winks at the baffled SECRETARY and sashays into a larger office.

DORIS

Doris Adelson. Ready to rejoin the Target family. Is Roy here?

SECRETARY

Wait! You can't just walk in there!

LARGE OFFICE

Bi-focaled ROY (now 60) sees Doris, rises.

ROY

Who are you and why are you here?

DORIS

Roy! I've returned at last! Doris!

ROY

Doris? Not candy department Doris?

He grimaces. She removes her coat and turns, swivels, models her (taped) shiny aluminum foil gown.

DORIS

Less than four dollars. Wipes clean.

ROY

I don't understand ... why you're here?

She kneels, grabs his hands.

DORIS

I am breaking up with you, Roy. Don't cry. I have a new man and he needs money. I have to take care of him.

ROY

Breaking up with me?

DORIS

No sense arguing. My mind is decided. I need my job back to buy him things.

ROY

And we would love to hire you back but we're overstaffed as it is. Dang it.

Doris rises, turns away to hide her shock ... and tears.

EXT. SHACK - HOURS LATER - DAY

Doris, weeping, parks Lilith's Mercedes. In the passenger seat is a box of BLONDE HAIR DYE and WINSTON CIGARETTES. Her aluminum foil dress is ripped.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SHACK - SAME

Cody squats, chiming the xylophone. Lilith traces her finger over his biceps.

LILITH

That sounds like our school signal to begin our halftime performance.

Like a young girl, she does a cheerleader ballet dance performance. His eyes lust after every curve of her body.

CODY

So you were the star of your school?

LILITH

(French accent)

Mais no. Mary-Ellen was always the best. But I had blackmailed the football coach to get the solo.

CODY

What did you have on him?

LILITH

(French accent)

He was a horrible beast. He was a horrible man to all of us. We were only oonze years old. Eleven.

She kisses him. His hands inch up and explore her waist and breasts. Doris enters. Lilith jumps to embrace Doris.

LILITH (CONT'D)

Where did you go, sweetie-sweet?

DORIS

Cody's mine. I discovered him. Don't you steal him.

LILITH

Does it look like I'm stealing anything?

Doris hands Cody the pack of Winstons.

CODY

That's my girl!

DORIS

Don't show anyone. I stole them. I went to get my job back but Roy said Target is overstaffed. It's because of the computers they sell to everybody on dry land!! I just know it is. Computers ruined my life!

Cody unwraps the cigarettes.

CODY

I'm going to call Target and cuss the jerks out.

LILITH

Save the energy and make us up lunch. I'm going to take a long, hot bath.

He shrugs, takes a match off the mantel, lights his Winston, inhales, goes to the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Cody searches the cupboards. Doris enters in her ripped aluminum foil dress. She squeezes between him and the counter, tries to be sexy.

DORIS

Paparazzi wants to know if you love me or Lilith or Marie?

CODY

Marie? How did you know her name?

DORIS

You want me to do a psychic reading?

CODY

Do you know how Marie feels about me?

DORIS

Of course I do but I charge for psychic readings.

CODY

You charge?

She slaps his face.

DORIS

All psychics charge.

He grabs her by the hair.

CODY

Don't scam a scammer, Doris. You're in over your head.

DORIS

Don't you threaten me after I opened my home and cooked you cake and chops!

She breaks away, goes to the sink, pours herself a glass of water, drinks, then throws the water on him.

CODY

Just do a psychic reading for me. Please.

DORIS

There's a fee. Twenty bucks.

CODY
Five.

DORIS
Ten.

CODY
Okay. Ten.

From his pocket, he hands her money.

DORIS
When you stole the crystal you polluted
the psychic energy, so it needs to
clean a few more hours.

He grabs the money back.

CODY
You're full of bullshit. You can't
contact the dead.

DORIS
She's dead?

CODY
You didn't know Marie was dead?

DORIS
Of course I knew your Marie was dead. I
channel the dead all the time. There
was something about a motorcycle.

CODY
What about the motorcycle?

DORIS
Did you have a motorcycle?

CODY
That's right. Did Marie tell you I
drove it too fast?

DORIS
She wanted you to ride slower.

CODY

Yep. She always used to say that.
You're good, Doris. Marie was good,
too. At getting her way. She would've
celebrated her thirty-second year of
high-maintenance next month.

DORIS

I thought she was twenty-two years-old.

CODY

That's how old she was when she died.
Ten years ago. You're freaking me out.

She smiles, takes the money back.

DORIS

I'm the world's best psychic. Ask me
questions if you don't believe me.
Blonde Marie. You in prison.

CODY

She told you I escaped from prison?

DORIS

(surprised)

Escaped?! ... Uh, yes! Those were her
exact words.

CODY

What else does she say? Does she ... do
you think that she ... does she ...

(emotional)

Would you think that she forgives me?

DORIS

Forgives ... you ...?

CODY

I didn't mean to kill her.

DORIS

Kill ...??

CODY

If she forgives me then maybe I can
move on. Forgive myself. And maybe even
love someone else.

He means Lilith but Doris thinks he means her.

CODY (CONT'D)

If she won't forgive me, Doris, then
I'm ... nothing. I'm ... stuck.

Doris turns to him, searching his eyes.

DORIS

She ... does ... not forgive you so
you're stuck here. But she wants you to
love again.

She purses her lips to be kissed. Cody sits, defeated.
Humiliated Doris runs upstairs.

BEDROOM - HOURS LATER

Lilith massages blonde dye through Doris' hair. Depressed
Cody enters, drinking coffee. He holds an extra cup. Both
ladies reach for it. He hands it to Lilith.

CODY

I just burnt lunch so if Doris doesn't
cook dinner we're all going to die of
starvation.

Cody locks eyes with Lilith. Doris is envious.

DORIS

I think I passed Jon today.

LILITH

Did you? Was he buying body lice medicine?

DORIS

He was driving his police car.

CODY

He's a cop?!

DORIS

Crooked as my house.

LILITH

I didn't marry crooked. My husband has
connections. Thank god. Sunbar attracts
transients like Cody and we don't need
any more city slickers either.

DORIS

Cody, if you burnt lunch you have to make dinner. A casserole.

Cody looks out the window and is startled.

CODY'S POV: convict Mike peeking in Lilith's car, seeing keys in the ignition.

CODY

A casserole? Okay, I'll try.

He quickly exits.

EXT. PORCH - MINUTES LATER

Cody tiptoes to Mike who is just about to start Lilith's car. Cody grabs the keys away.

MIKE

Get in. Let's drive out of state.

CODY

You can't steal her car. She's married to a jerk cop. Mike, go somewhere else. These ladies are good to me.

MIKE

Ladies? There's one for me now?

CODY

Not your type. Please go away.

MIKE

If we kill them, we can hide out here.

CODY

No, they're good people.

MIKE

Damn you. You owe me one.

On the console, Mike finds a PEN and NOTE PAPER, writes.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Here's a number of a cell phone I stole. Call me by tomorrow with tips to get loot, or I come back here to kill. All three of you.

Mike punches Cody then walks off. Cody paces, worried.

INT. KITCHEN - SHACK - NIGHT

Lilith pours wine. Cody, anxious, sets down a casserole.

CODY

What is she doing up there?

LILITH

I can't even imagine.

CODY

You should have made her come down and cook. I don't know how to make a stupid casserole. This is bologna, three cans of beans and Frosted Flakes.

She GIGGLES. He touches her face, then retreats when he hears Doris descend the stairs, now a very unnatural blonde.

CODY (CONT'D)

Look at you, Doris. I bet Target is kicking themselves now.

DORIS

No they're not. The color's completely uneven.

Doris slaps her own face for no reason. Then does it again.

LILITH

Honey-doll, don't hit your face!

They're all shocked as Doris slaps herself a total of 10 times.

DORIS

It wasn't me. I couldn't help it.

Cody and Lilith exchange eyerolls.

CODY

Somebody sure smells like a movie-star.

DORIS

That's my perfume.

Doris sees Lilith wink at Cody, who winks back. Doris gets jealous.

DORIS (CONT'D)

I'm not sure I'll be able to reach Marie today after all.

LILITH

Marie? Who is this Marie?

DORIS

Cody wants to reach his girlfriend.

CODY

Ex.

LILITH

Does he?

CODY

Just a game. Marie moved ... I can't ... locate her.

Cody studies his fork.

LILITH

I can always take these old forks off your hands, Doris. Why don't I buy you a shiny new set instead?

DORIS

You're not getting the Civil War forks.

LILITH

Jon wants the forks.

DORIS

I hate Jon.

LILITH

No no no, without Jon you'd be in an institu... We must always be very very nice to Jon. Wouldn't you like to trade these forks for my bicycle?

DORIS

Gypsy Mother left them to meeeeeee.

LILITH

How about trading them for my massage chair?

DORIS

No, Lilith! These are from Gypsy Mother! Cody, it's a full moon tonight. Perfect for our psychic reading, Cody.

LILITH

No games tonight, kids. Can't we just sit here like adults and gossip?

DORIS

When I concentrate I see Marie's face and her blonde hair.

LILITH

You sure Cody didn't tell you these things?

CODY

I didn't tell her nothing.

LILITH

Do you have a tattoo that reads Marie?

CODY

No. But -- I did have a paper with that information in it.

DORIS

How could I have read it if you burnt your paper?

Cody blushes. Has he been duped by Doris?

LILITH

Allow me to try to locate this Marie for you. On my iPhone?

CODY

You don't have to do that.

LILITH

I insist. What's Marie's last name?!

DORIS

It's a full moon. Cody, you know to never let the light of a full moon catch you frowning or you face death within three days?

CODY

This one of those witch tales?

LILITH

It's better to go along with witch tales in Sunbar County, just in case.

CODY

Are you two witches?

Lilith winks. He winks back. Doris sees, is livid.

DORIS

Face death in three days. Maybe that's what happened to Marie.

LILITH

Marie's ... dead? Cody said she moved.

CODY

Death ... is a move.

LILITH

Enough of these games. Go to the basement and have your little séance. I've had as much as I can take!

Lilith pushes Cody and Doris into the basement stairs but he grabs Lilith before she slams the door. Doris trips, nearly falls, but recovers, and continues downstairs.

CODY

You're the one deceiving, Lil. Wedding ring in the pocket. No, wait a minute, wedding ring on the finger.

LILITH

Stop your pressing on my bruise!

CODY

Your husband beats you - or not? First time you see me, you tell me to go, then you insist I stay so you can drive me to town ... but no, you never drive me to town. You say "do my lips look like I smoke?" like you don't smoke, but you do smoke. Lying Lilith.

Lilith pushes him, slams the door, forcing him to trip down the stairs. At the bottom, Doris helps him up.

DORIS

Marie is here.

CODY

Where?? I don't see her.

DORIS

Maybe she is the one who slapped me??

CODY

You slapped you. Don't lie.

DORIS

Marie is telling me about dying.
Motorcycle going too fast. By a motel?

Cody's eyes enlarge, he follows Doris. They sit on the couch. She shuffles her Gypsy cards, lights a candle.

DORIS (CONT'D)

You want Marie to forgive you. Want me to tell Marie that you didn't mean it?

Cody is emotional, yet skeptical.

CODY

Tell me what she looks like.

DORIS

Blonde.

CODY

Tall or short?

DORIS

Shh. Marie is mumbling in my ear. She's very nice. Something about a kiss.

CODY

I don't understand.

DORIS

She wants a kiss. This minute, before her energy evaporates.

He kisses the air.

DORIS (CONT'D)

That wasn't even near her face,
bonehead. Wait! She wants to jump in my
body. You have to kiss her in my body.

CODY

No way.

DORIS

Marie is stuck in a tortured memory and
needs to think about a better time than
the Motel Eight parking lot.

CODY

Motel Eight parking lot? You did read
my paper! My sixes look like eights! It
was a Motel Six not Motel Eight!

He rises, shakes his fist in anger. Doris rises, paces.

DORIS

Marie's trapped thinking about you
driving her too fast ...

CODY

You like Lilith to think you're
mentally-handicapped, don't you, you
little snake!

DORIS POV: MARIE'S GHOST APPEARS.

DORIS

It's like you're the dead one? It's
like you're the one that died. Look
inside, she says. Look in your heart.

She pokes his chest.

CODY

Don't you touch me!

DORIS

There. It turned sour she says. Sour.
You didn't use to be "jaded." Her
words. You're cold inside now.

He moves away, stares out the basement window.

CODY

I didn't use to be cold-hearted.

DORIS

Think about what you wanna say to her when you kiss her. Help Marie out of the parking lot. So she can forgive you, you bonehead.

Cody walks to Doris, towers over her.

CODY

There's no bonehead down here. Marie didn't die in the parking lot!

DORIS POV: MARIE'S GHOST WALKS OUT THROUGH THE WALL.

DORIS

More ... in the highway, wasn't it?

CODY

How did you know that? That wasn't on the paper!

DORIS

Why did you kill her?

CODY

No, not me -- the injuries did.

DORIS

You want to leave her tortured forever and ever in eternity?

CODY

No. No!! Of course not.

DORIS

To forgive, Marie needs ... a kiss.

CODY

This is crazye, Doris. Last night you wanted to kiss me and now I'm supposed to believe my dead girlfriend wants me to kiss you?

DORIS

Marie is stuck in a tortured memory.

CODY

You're not dumb enough to think I buy this crap.

DORIS

Marie was jealous of me wanting a kiss. Which is why she wants a kiss now.

CODY

That so doesn't make sense.

DORIS

Neither does killing someone you love. Neither does keeping someone you love tortured in an endless death on a freeway. A kiss is a small price to pay to raise someone's spirit to Heaven.

CODY

If I kiss you, don't you dare tell Lilith I ever fell for this.

DORIS

Cody, I don't even want to kiss you now. Can't you see I'm in a trance??

CODY

Okay. I'm going to kiss you. Quickly.

DORIS

Marie needs you to show her how much you love and miss her.

He closes his eyes, pulls Doris into him and kisses her. Passionately.

CODY

What did Marie say?

DORIS

She wants you to take off your underwear again and jump up and down.

Furious, he almost punches her, punches the wall instead.

KITCHEN

Lilith is packing the framed photo in her suitcase on the table. Doris runs in from the basement, SCREAMING.

LILITH

What happened??

DORIS

He's trying to kill me!

Cody lunges into the room. Lilith stands in front of Doris to protect her.

LILITH

Don't you lay a hand on my sister!

DORIS

He killed Marie.

CODY

Things got out of control.

LILITH

You killed your girlfriend?!

CODY

It was a motorcycle accident.

Lilith cannot zip her overloaded suitcase. The framed photo falls out of it. He reaches for it. Lilith pushes him away.

CODY (CONT'D)

Why are you pushing away a good guy like me?

LILITH

We don't know anything about you.

CODY

You know I like it here with you guys.

DORIS

You do?

Cody steals the photo away from Lilith.

CODY

I do ... What's so special about this photo?

LILITH

Please. Leave. This. Dwelling. Now!

CODY

You were always beautiful. Even as a kid. How old were you in this picture?

DORIS

Two. And thank you.

CODY

I mean Lilith. How old were you, Lilith?

LILITH

Give that photograph to me!

CODY

In a minute! Just tell me how old you were! What's the big deal?

DORIS

She was --

LILITH

Shut your mouth! Don't tell him.

CODY

Why such a big secret? You still look great, Lilith, no matter how old --

LILITH

Doris, don't you say anything!

CODY

Come on. This is silly. You were a teenager ... or barely ... so you were either fourteen, fifteen, thirteen?

LILITH

What right does this evil stranger have to interrogate us?!

CODY

Oh my god. You were fourteen.

(adding it up)

A twelve year difference. There was a high school football coach. When you were "oonze." Eleven.

LILITH

You stop your babbling this instant!

Lilith pushes Doris to the living room.

LILITH (CONT'D)

Go and lie on the couch and turn on TV,
sweetie-sweet. Go on. I'll bring you
some sugar tea!! Scoot scoot scoot!

DORIS

I'm staying here with you guys.

LILITH

Go watch TV!

CODY

Doris! Leave us alone a minute! Go.

Doris exits, irritated. When she's out of earshot:

LILITH (CONT'D)

(whispers to Cody)

The football coach ... he raped me.

She rips the photo to shreds.

CODY

(whispers)

Your Gypsy mother found Doris before
the coyotes found Doris. But you didn't
find Doris. She did. And she was hard
of hearing! Do you know how loud Doris
must have been screaming?

LILITH

(crying)

Of course.

CODY

She was screaming for you to get her
from where you dumped her to die.

He holds her face to stop it from shaking.

CODY (CONT'D)

Were you going to walk out on me just
like that?

LILITH

You repulse me.

CODY

Doris doesn't know you're her mother?

LILITH

Of course not. She can't ever know I didn't want her. That she was a mistake from rape. She thinks she is a rose that grew out of the dirt, and in a way, she did. I'm the only person in her life and she needs me. As is! Her hating me would cut me out of her life and she'd be totally helpless.

CODY

She would understand, forgive you.

LILITH

She does not have the capacity. She's fragile, her reality shifts. My visits are her throughline. I can't ever stop. The way it is is the way it has to be.

CODY

You're lying to her every minute.

LILITH

For her benefit! I'm calling the police this instant if you don't remove yourself from this dwelling.

CODY

Call your cop husband. I have some things I'd like him to hear.

LILITH

Maybe I should tell Jon that you were the one who raped me last year?

CODY

Go ahead. Liar. I have an alibi.

He offers her the phone. Instead, she fills a glass with wine and exits to the living room. He walks to the kitchen window and studies the Mercedes, deliberating stealing it.

LIVING ROOM

Cody enters but neither Doris or Lilith are there.

EXT. SHACK - NIGHT - MINUTES LATER

Cody passes the moonlit woodpile, climbs in the Mercedes, inches the keys to the ignition - then realizes.

CODY

The axe is gone. Oh no! Mike??

He hears a SCREAM.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT - SAME

Doris SCREAMS, walks the moonlit garden swinging the axe violently, ripping the fencing out of the ground.

EXT. PORCH - SAME

Cody YELLS, looking for signs of Lilith or Doris.

CODY

Hey?! Where are you guys?!

He races around the shack to rescue them from Mike.

EXT. GARDEN - SAME

Cody breathes relieved seeing it's Doris with the axe, only ruining her pumpkins and plants. He tiptoes back.

EXT. SHACK - MERCEDES - SAME

Cody climbs back into the Mercedes. Also outdoors, Lilith, with wine glass, spies on Cody from the shadows, watching him finally drive away.

EXT. GARDEN - MINUTES LATER

Doris SCREAMS and assaults the towering oak, axing lower branches. SQUIRRELS fall and scurry in the mud. Lilith races in.

LILITH

What are you doing? No, Doris! No! You love this garden!!

Doris axes apart her tomato stakes. Lilith chugs wine, drops the glass then runs to Doris, attempting to hold Doris' axe still. Doris SCREAMS and bulldozes Lilith off of her. Lilith slips and rolls in the mud, SCREAMS.

LILITH (CONT'D)

It's all you have!

Lilith ducks from the light of the full moon.

LILITH (CONT'D)

You're acting like a child, Doris!

Lilith backs up against the tree for support and scrapes the mud off her arms.

LILITH (CONT'D)

You give me the axe! Give it over to me!

Doris, frowning, axes scarecrow Jon to pieces.

LILITH (CONT'D)

Do not let the full moon catch you
frowning!!

DORIS

You don't get Cody!

LILITH

Stop it, sweetie-sweet! Cody's already gone! He took my car! And we're better for it -- his wild imagination!

DORIS

But Cody can't leave! I've got clips of his hair taped to my heart! It's heart-guaranteed!

LILITH

You have to stop believing your own stories! You know you have a tendency to see things that aren't there!

Doris swings the axe at Lilith. Lilith SHRIEKS, ducks, runs. Doris chases her with the axe. Lilith trips and crashes into mud. Now exposed to the moonlight, Lilith forces a ridiculous smile (so the moon doesn't catch her frowning).

LILITH

(forcing a smile)

You put the axe down this minute!

DORIS

You stay away from my house!

LILITH

(forcing a smile)

Honey-pie, you need me, and I need you
-- nobody cares about you more than I
do! Nobody! Now stop this tantrum!

DORIS

Can we share him?

Lilith looks at her, incredulous.

LILITH

Smile!! The full moon!!

DORIS

(forcing a smile)

Like our other things. Like the hair-
dye and coffee and your old clothes and
church hats. Like our toys. Like the
baby dolls and Barbies and the man doll
that we used to have.

LILITH

(forcing a smile)

My ... old rubber man doll?

DORIS

(forcing a smile)

Mine. Gypsy Mother gave me a man doll.

LILITH

(forcing a smile)

That's not true, sweetie. Betsy Webber
bought him for me.

DORIS

(forcing a smile)

Can we share him like we shared the man
toy?

Doris SOBS. Lilith throws the axe into the darkness, then
cradles Doris like a little baby, out of the moonlight.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Can I have Cody when you're done with
him?

LILITH

You're delirious.

DORIS

He didn't mean to kill that girl.

LILITH

Sugar-pie, you can't believe men.

DORIS

He was here first before you this time.

LILITH

We do not need Cody. It'll be just us two out here. Just us like always.

DORIS

It's just me and scarecrows until you bring me food.

LILITH

I come here every Saturday. You are the best part of my week. Of my life. You don't see it. You're innocence -- I always leave here feeling hopeful again. Because you are.

Muddy Lilith kneels and caresses the axed scarecrows: Paul Junior, Sal Junior, Davy Junior. Doris joins her.

LILITH (CONT'D)

We always had the same taste in men, didn't we?

DORIS

Exact same. We still do. Four husbands and now Cody.

LILITH

Cody is gone.

WIDESHOT: Lilith rocks Doris. Their silhouettes are the only movement on the entire horizon. Lilith rises and pulls Doris up, brushing off the mud on her legs.

LILITH (CONT'D)

Ups-a-daisy. Enough of this. Let's go inside. Scoot.

They walk toward the shack, both fake smiling for only the seconds they are in the moonlight.

LILITH (CONT'D)

You married men that you sewed together from my husband's old clothing. You don't have anything except a garden but somehow you give me whatever I need whenever I need it.

DORIS

I always give you anything.

LILITH

The forks? For Jon?

Doris shakes her head, CRIES.

DORIS

Jon can burn in a grease fire.

LILITH

Honey-girl, Jon pays for your life.

DORIS

Then I'll get my job back.

LILITH

Your bills are too expensive. They require Jon. And Jon requires ... the forks.

Doris has a SCREAMING TANTRUM. Lilith is embarrassed. Humiliated. And guilt-ridden.

LILITH (CONT'D)

Screaming is not going to get you what you want. I know how lonely you must be. No more scarecrow husbands. We're going to find you a real man. Somehow we will.

DORIS

Cody is heart-guaranteed!

KITCHEN

Doris sits on a chair, lifeless. Lilith paces, in a robe, sees out the window that the Mercedes has returned!

LILITH

Go up to bed, honey-girl. I'll be up in a minute. Scoot scoot scoot!

Lilith sneaks an AMBIEN in Doris's DRINK. After Doris leaves, Lilith opens the basement door.

BASEMENT

Lilith tip-toes down to find Cody, lying awake.

CODY

I hate being cold. Come warm me up.

LILITH

You're a no-good thief.

CODY

I brought it back.

LILITH

I am clueless as to why?

CODY

I love you. I tried to hold back but maybe Doris was right that Marie wants me to love again. To love you.

They kiss tenderly. He backs up, tears his shirt off. She throws her robe against the wall. He lifts her, kisses her, lowers her onto the couch. They make love.

BEDROOM - HOUR LATER

Lilith tip-toes in to find Doris asleep. Lilith opens the closet.

CLOSET

Lilith searches through hanging nightgowns, one falls. Picking it up, she finds on the floor a dusty rubber MAN TOY doll wearing a blue shirt and jeans (looks like Cody), the "man toy" that they shared as kids. Lilith remembers:

FLASHBACK:

EXT. SHACK - DAY - 1980

The shack, not as worn. A rotund eleven year-old BETSY

WEBBER pounds on the door, holding the man toy.

INT. SHACK - MINUTES LATER

GYPSY MOTHER is rocking a tiny day-old BABY DORIS.

GYPSY MOTHER

Come in, Betsy. Haven't seen you all summer, child! Come on in and see what we found in the ragweed last night.

Betsy walks in and is stunned to see a baby. Betsy speaks loud so Gypsy Mother can hear.

BETSY

You found a baby?!

GYPSY MOTHER

We gonna call her Doris.

BETSY

She's so itty-bitty!

GYPSY MOTHER

Ain't it so? Now don't get too close, darling, it took me all night to get her breath at regular.

BETSY

School's started already and the teachers been wondering where's Lilith been all summer! I came to see and bring her a new doll!

GYPSY MOTHER

Isn't that a lovely doll! I'll give it to her. Lilith would love to see you but she has a virus and ain't feeling up to schooling. We both was up all night with this one here.

Betsy nods. Awkward silence as a chunky post-birthing Lilith (11) comes down the stairs.

LILITH

Why did you come here, Betsy?

BETSY

I brought you a doll. School started.

LILITH

Did it already?

BETSY

There will be a football team this year, too. I was thinking we should start practicing if we're going to be cheerleaders again.

LILITH

Let me think about that some more.

BETSY

If we practice we'll be great. So if you want to practice jumps and things you should come to school.

LILITH

I'm so sorry I haven't come ... had the longest flu.

BETSY

I'll tell the teachers. About the flu.
(glancing at Doris)
There's probably no reason to tell her about the baby.

Betsy hands the man toy to Lilith then goes to exit.

LILITH

No reason. We don't know who's the mother. She was discarded in the garden.

GYPSY MOTHER

If you got an extra blanket we could put it to use.

BETSY

I'm sure I can find one somewhere!

LILITH

I don't know what I'd do without ya, Betsy Webber. You light my soul.

BETSY

I'll be back tomorrow with a blanket.

FLASH-FORWARD:

BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Lilith awakes to see an overly excited (and not made-up) Doris looking out the window.

DORIS

Cody didn't go! He's fixing the garden!

Doris grins, caresses the taped hair over her heart.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

The sun highlights the worst of the massacre. A DEER eats slaughtered squash. Cody steps over the fence pieces to examine a torso of a scarecrow. He finds its' head and tries to reattach it.

INT. KITCHEN - SHACK - MINUTES LATER

Lilith, in face cream, taps Doris on the shoulder and takes over making coffee.

DORIS

I don't even want to go out there and see the wrecking I did.

Lilith takes the IRONING BOARD out of a closet and stands it in front of Doris. She puts the BUSHEL OF CLOTHES on it.

LILITH

Remember that heavy man with the lisp?
The one with the skinny head who works
at the slaughter house?

DORIS

He's cute.

LILITH

You're telling me! I wonder if you'd
like to make him porkchops?

DORIS

No. I don't want him anymore. He had
his chance. I cook for Cody now.

Doris rises, irons. Cody enters.

CODY

Doris, how could you do that to your garden? It looks like hell. You look good though. With no make-up.

He corners Lilith, touches her face cream.

CODY (CONT'D)

I like the clowny face cream on you. I smell coffee.

DORIS

It's not done yet.

The phone RINGS. Tense silence.

LILITH

(frightened)

Tell Jon I'm busy doing charity. Out of town.

Lilith suddenly moves for the phone, changes her mind, signals Doris to answer it. Doris does.

DORIS

(into phone)

Hello Jon ... she said something about a charity ... out of town somewhere ... sure ... ah huh ... okay ... bye.

(hangs up)

Jon says you better get home.

CODY

Is he your husband -- or your boss??

LILITH

Scout it, houseboy, go fetch some slaughtered pumpkin so we can make pie.

EXT. SHACK - DAY - MINUTES LATER

Cody steps down to the garden and looks for a pumpkin. It's cold in the shade of the tree so HE BASKS IN THE WARM SUN. HE LIKES IT THERE, LAYS DOWN, SMILES. IT FEELS AMAZING.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - MINUTES LATER

Doris irons. Lilith stares out the window.

LILITH'S POV: A car passes, then Cody jumps into frame with the axe. Lilith SCREAMS. He crosses his eyes and extends his chin, trying to look like a psychotic serial killer. He LAUGHS then hands her pumpkin pieces. Afterwards Lilith slams the window down.

LILITH

He's a loose cannon. There's no telling what games he plays.

DORIS

He plays the xylophone.

Ironing, Doris holds up a blouse of Lilith's.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Can I borrow this blouse?

LILITH

Oh, honey-pie, you know that I don't like to lend my things out. No.

(shakes her head)

I'm a monster. Yes, wear anything you desire. And if you're going to wear such a pricey blouse, I think you're right that you should get a job again? Get out of the house, make friends? Get have money if anything happens to me or Jon.

EXT. STRIP MALL - DAY - AN HOUR LATER

Wearing that blouse, Doris walks into Neiman Marcus.

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS MANAGERIAL OFFICES - MINUTES LATER

Mary-Ellen, wearing a nametag, interviews Doris as she fills out an APPLICATION.

MARY-ELLEN

Well, welcome to Sunbar County, Doris! Your sister says you're very "special" and in Sunbar for a long stay! Lilith is right, you do not want to deal with the cash registers. Let the kids in computer tech handle that.

DORIS

Computers ruined my life.

MARY-ELLEN

We're all in the same boat, darlin. Let me take a look at you. I bet you'd be a big help bussing tables in our cafeteria a few times a week. Would you bus tables for the restaurant?

DORIS

I'll do it.

MARY-ELLEN

Well then. You came at a good time. Someone just gave their notice. We just need approval from my highers-up but between you and me, they'll hire anybody for the bussing positions.

Mary-Ellen knocks on an office door, reading "SUPERVISOR BETSY WEBBER." Reading it, Doris panics!

BETSY WEBBER (O.S.)

Come in.

Mary-Ellen twists the knob and escorts in Doris.

HEAD SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE

Chain-smoking Betsy Webber looks up, confused.

BETSY WEBBER

Mary-Ellen, who have you brought?

MARY-ELLEN

Lilith called to say her "special" sister just moved here. This is Doris, who would like to bus tables. Not work cash registers. She seems strong.

Mary-Ellen leaves. Betsy rises, recognizes Doris.

BETSY WEBBER

My. It's been a coon's age. Have not seen you for ten years? At Target? Valentine's Day. When you bit me and Roy.

DORIS

I cursed the oily blubber on you. You want me to take the curse off you or not?

BETSY

Fine, Doris. Yes, you can be a busboy. Is that what you want to do? Pick up greasy plates? Not very glamorous.

DORIS

You should have let me have Roy, you Eskimo slut.

BETSY

I assume that language is reserved only for your bosses, Doris, you can't talk to the customers that way. Wait! Your mother ... um ... sister ... said you enjoy cooking, is that a fact, dear?

DORIS

I cook better than you.

BETSY

We agree on that. Do you think you can bake a hundred orange roughy Friday? They can't burn.

DORIS

I can. I will. Thank you, Betsy Webber.

BETSY WEBBER

Come give me a "Welcome to Neiman Marcus" hug. No biting.

They hug. Doris runway sashays. Betsy applauds, then Betsy also runway sashays back and forth. Doris applauds, finally smiles. The two take turns with model poses. They swivel, twirl, sashay and pivot and applaud each other.

INT. TARGET - DAY - MINUTES LATER

Dina, wearing the blouse Doris handed her, sees Doris and throws perfume samples in a bag.

DINA

Here.

DORIS

I didn't come for Target perfume, you alcoholic.

DINA

Then what may I help you with today?

DORIS

I'll be working at Neiman Marcus soon but I don't need a ride because I'll get a helicopter but if you want to meet on our lunch breaks let me know.

DINA

(beat)

What time will your break be?

DORIS

One.

Dina looks at her a long while.

DINA

We can go to Arby's.

EXT. PORCH - SHACK - DAY

Cody stacks firewood then sits on the porch bench. He shakes his pack of Winston's. A mail truck pulls up. Pete gets out with mail.

PETE

Mail for Doris Adelson. You must be her boyfriend?

CODY

What?? No way. Give me the mail.

Lilith exits from the shack, seductive.

LILITH

I didn't know the mailman was here.

PETE

Hello Mrs. Jones. Lilith.

LILITH

(pretending)

Have we met?

PETE

Pete. From Michigan. Where men know how to give tender massages?

LILITH

I don't like your attitude!

Pete rolls his eyes, walks to his truck. Cody follows and speaks to Pete when out of Lilith's earshot.

CODY

You seem cool. You get around.

PETE

Mailmen do get around.

CODY

Selling meth? Grams? Sacks?

PETE

Drugs?

CODY

I need a bit. To take the edge off.

PETE

Drugs? I don't sell drugs, dude.

CODY

I was kidding. I'm a cop. Good to know you're clean. Stay clean.

Pete, offended, drives away. Cody walks to Lilith.

CODY (CONT'D)

You have a boyfriend in Michigan?

LILITH

Years ago.

CODY

And?

LILITH

(Midwestern accent)

Oh for gosh sakes, my guy Clem was a super bowler, even with a Pabst brewski in his hand, don't you know.

She ducks from the sun so he blocks her sun for her.

CODY

Saved you a wrinkle.

He kisses her neck, rubs her butt.

LILITH

You wrinkled my entire brain in a couple days. Deepened my crow's feet.

CODY

You could be ancient and you'd still give me a hard-on. There's just a magnetic chemistry about us.

LILITH

From your standpoint.

CODY

A girl afraid of the moon and the sun.

LILITH

A girl? Are you blind? It's too late.

He grabs her, holds her although she resists.

CODY

I'm shading you.

LILITH

Shhhh.

He takes off his shirt. She's feeling loose, too.

LILITH (CONT'D)

You're a dangerous fool.

CODY

You excite me more than a living creature ought to.

He kisses her then gazes into her eyes.

LILITH

I don't ... feel the way you do.

He looks hurt until Lilith pushes his head down on her nipple. He sucks ravenously.

CODY

You love me, too.

Her hands push his head lower. He takes her hand, navigates it to slap his face.

CODY (CONT'D)

I didn't think I could love again.

LILITH

You can't.

CODY

I am.

LILITH

No.

She sits, hides her face in her hands. He sits next to her. The sun is so hot the hair on his neck curls.

LILITH (CONT'D)

I will never leave Jon.

CODY

You will. It's you and me from here on out.

Lilith wipes her tears. Cody grabs both her wrists, forces her to hit him lightly again.

LILITH

What's wrong with you?

He won't release her. She's left without choice. She has to hit him to break free.

CODY

Come on! Do it! I dig the rough stuff.

LILITH

I don't want to hit anybody!

CODY

Then I'll tell Jon about us.

She slaps the shit out of him as he sinks to her feet. He holds onto her legs, submissive, in love.

LILITH

What's wrong with your deranged soul?

CODY

I was a bad boy. I need a spanking.

She kicks loose and runs into the house.

INT. BEDROOM - SHACK - DAY - MINUTES LATER

Lilith packs her things. She hears Cody running up the stairs and she runs to close the door. They struggle, each pushing the door. She slips. He catches her.

LILITH

I am married.

CODY

He hits you.

LILITH

Once. Twice. Accidents.

CODY

Let's run away. Hit me instead. Not hard stuff, just spankings and stuff.

LILITH

I can't leave Jon. Jon pays for Doris to live. He won't let me get a paying job, so this way I am dependent on him.

CODY

I wish he were dead. And left all his money to you. To us.

LILITH

I wouldn't refuse it.

Eye-contact. They study each other.

KITCHEN

Cody pours two glasses of wine and hands one to Lilith who's speaking on her cell phone.

LILITH

(into phone)

Jon, I'm volunteering at the charity bakeries day and night ... we have so many homeless in Charleston to feed ... I'm at some Charleston dive motel ...

INT. VICTORIAN MANOR - SAME

Jon is on the phone, holding a UPS I.D..

JON
(into phone)
Leave the dang motel and get home. Now.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

LILITH
Jon, we're surprising an impoverished
handicapped boy with a birthday party.
They still require my help.

JON
How do I know you ain't in bed with
some UPS man named Will.

LILITH
(caught, stammers)
Would you rather I don't ask the UPS
guys for I.D. and end up butchered?!

JON
I catch you with him and I butcher you.

LILITH
Your audacity, Jon! As you screw my
best friend right under my nose!

She hangs up. Then dials back. But Cody hangs up.

LILITH (CONT'D)
I can't get him angry. He'll hurt me
and Doris! We can't ever upset Jon.

Cody kisses her, undresses her, lifts her naked body onto
the table, climbs on top of her.

LILITH (CONT'D)
Jon can never know about this.

CODY
No more Jon. It's just you and me.

INT. KITCHEN - SHACK - HOURS LATER - NIGHT

Cody whispers into the wall phone:

CODY
 (into phone)
 Officer Jon Jones ... Jonathan Jones.
 He's loaded with bucks ... All I know
 is he's loaded, Mike. So get your
 sources to open the cop's account info.

Lilith enters. He hangs up. Sits.

LILITH
 Who were you speaking to?

CODY
 Wrong number.

Doris, head wrapped in scarf, enters, jubilant, sits.

DORIS
 Betsy Webber put me in charge of
 Friday's fish.

LILITH
 Lucky you.

CODY
 Lucky fish.

Cody sets down a CASSEROLE, serves it, sits.

CODY (CONT'D)
 How does my cooking taste, Lil? No
 Frosted Flakes this time.

She ignores him, pensive.

EXT. SHACK - NIGHT - HOUR LATER

Cody roams to the Mercedes. The keys are inside. He paces
 up the road, then back to the car. Lilith spies on him
 through the kitchen window, poker-faced.

LIVING ROOM

Cody throws another log on the fire and sits, glum.

BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Lilith climbs into bed with Doris.

LILITH

There's that Cuban with the limp who
sells bait, always seemed fond of you.

DORIS

Did you have nookie with Cody?

Lilith puts Doris's head on her bosom, strokes her hair.

LILITH

What are we going to do with your wild
imagination? You're obsessed with him.

DORIS

He's all I think about.

LILITH

Men hypnotize. Like all those men who
would come by and bring us groceries
after Gypsy Mother died? One would
always spend the night "to protect us."
But Paul put an end to those men and
insisted I be his teenage bride but the
pervert left me for another teenager.

Lilith shows Doris a PHOTO OF PAUL on her phone. Then a
PHOTO OF SAL.

DORIS

Then Sal beat him up?

LILITH

Sal the alpha-male. Intoxicating. I was
so lucky Sal married me, wasn't I?
Until he left me for Mary-Ellen. Thank
God the best-looking man of all came
into my life then and made me laugh.

Lilith shows a PHOTO OF DAVEY.

LILITH (CONT'D)

Davey's practical jokes made me hum
again, until I learned our marriage was
the joke and he was bisexual and in
love with our plumber. I was devastated
when he left me for a plumber! Losing a
good plumber like that!

DORIS

They always leave you. Jon's going to leave you, too. They always do.

Lilith rises, paces, scrolls through her phone.

LILITH

He cannot. He cannot ever leave us. We require Jon.

DORIS

I require Cody. He makes me feel incredible.

LILITH

Your adorable house doesn't make you feel incredible?

DORIS

It could burn down for all I care.

LILITH

Don't curse it like that. You love this place. Your impressive garden ...

DORIS

I don't know if I'll have the patience for it next year.

LILITH

It means the world to you. And all of us. We all get such pleasure from your garden. What about the antique armoire?

DORIS

It doesn't mean anything ... It was at a flea market.

LILITH

This warm bed? Your cozy little vanity? Don't you care about these things? What about the Civil War cutlery?

DORIS

Nothing feels like I do when I look at him or when he comes into a room.

LILITH

You'd give up the forks?

DORIS

He means more to me than the forks.

Lilith grabs something from the closet floor.

LILITH

You'd trade the forks for Cody?

DORIS

If I had to choose. But I don't. I have a wish, don't I?

LILITH

No one knows if that witch's tale has any truth to it, but if it does, don't use your one wish to make someone do something they don't want to do! Save the wish for when you're in danger.

Doris circles both her index fingers around her eyes.

DORIS

I wish Cody ...

Lilith covers Doris's mouth.

LILITH

Your wish is hereby canceled. Save it for when you're in danger!

Lilith's fingers walk the man doll to Doris's side.

DORIS

The man toy!

LILITH

He was here all the time, you messy housekeeper.

EXT. GARDEN - SHACK - DAY

Doris toils under the oak tree.

FORTY FEET AWAY: Cody and Lilith realign fencing.

CODY

What gets me is that it's still happening. When it all went down.

LILITH

When Marie died?

CODY

I see her last look she gave me ...
like she hated me ... I hear her
yelling ... I taste the crystal meth.

FLASHBACK:

EXT - MOTEL 6 PARKING LOT - HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Cody drives a motorcycle on one wheel to impress MARIE (22), sitting behind him, holding on.

He slips off the bike. She falls onto the handlebars.

HIS POV: Marie terrified and angry spinning to her death as the motorcycle careens onto the highway and drags her under a truck.

ON CODY: shocked, tormented, crawling in the middle of the highway, finding Marie bloody and dead. He SCREAMS. He WEEPS. He SOBS.

Drugged, he darts between cars, desperate, confused.

FLASH-FORWARD:

EXT. SHACK - DAY

Lilith and Cody continue to realign garden fencing.

CODY

Maybe I'm still high. I don't know.

LILITH

What do you feel now about drugs?

CODY

You offering?

LILITH

No! You must stay away from drugs.

CODY

Don't worry. It's not like I know any
drug dealers.

LILITH

But if you did?

CODY

Drugs can be a nice break. Takes the edge off. Low doses.

LILITH

I see.

CODY

You look old when you look angry.

LILITH

Meanie! Why haven't you run home to the safety of your family?

CODY

That's the first place cops would look.

LILITH

What do you mean? ... You weren't released from prison? ... You escaped?

CODY

Never mind.

LILITH

Aren't you concerned that your family might think you're deceased??

CODY

They might be dead. I don't know. Why didn't they ever visit me in jail??

He touches where the sun heats her forearm. Then he pulls a SHOVEL out of the cold dirt and presses it there. She flinches, shivers.

CODY (CONT'D)

I died in that cold cell.

LILITH

Prison isn't that cold. Jon has taken me to the jailhouse and it's heated.

CODY

When you walk in, no doubt it is heated. You're hot. You don't know what it's like to be a cold man in a cold cell. What it's like when the sun doesn't come out for ten years! Nothing warm inside or out. I'm still freezing.

LILITH

Get over in the sun by Doris. She requires your assistance. Scoot scoot!

He looks up to see Doris struggling to stab duct-taped tomato stakes in the earth.

CODY

Dor! I'll help you with that!

Watching Cody and Doris, Lilith - has - an - idea.

LILITH

Cody! We need you putting in the fence there!

Lilith points to an area. He goes to it. Lilith walks to where Doris is re-standing Jon Junior. Lilith rips the flannel jacket off the scarecrow.

LILITH (CONT'D)

Cody's going to need this more.

Lilith marches to Cody, who is working on his knees. She pulls him up by his shirt.

CODY

What's wrong?

LILITH

Winter's coming soon. We can't have you shivering.

She studies him as he tries on the scarecrow coat.

CODY

Wow. It fits.

LILITH

It requires cleaning. Don't you think you should put it in the wash?

CODY

Sure.

LILITH

Get. Scoot scoot scoot.

And off he walks just as instructed.

INT. KITCHEN - SHACK - NIGHT

Cody whispers into the phone.

CODY

What did you find out?

MIKE (O.S.)

The cop's crazy about a Mary-Allen?

CODY

Lilith mentioned Mary something.

MIKE (O.S.)

He must be screwing Mary-Allen because his will states she gets everything. Nothing goes to Lilith.

CODY

What a piece of shit he is.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Cody plays the xylophone. Lilith sits on the recliner reading her iPhone. Doris sits on the couch, sewing together DISHTOWELS (with drawn moons and writing).

LILITH

Doris is making you a thick shirt so you'll be warm 'round the clock.

DORIS

The different moons have the explanations next to them so you won't bother me by asking which means what and when not to look at the moon. Never let the light of a full moon catch you frowning or you'll face death in three days.

He hugs her. She smiles and concentrates on her stitching. Cody waves his xylophone mallet to get Lilith's attention,

but she pretends she doesn't see him, and ducks behind her iPhone, where she also hides a few Civil War forks.

CODY

Lilith, do we have any more pie?

LILITH

I believe so.

CODY

Can you show me where it is?

LILITH

Need I draw you a map to the kitchen?

Cody is pissed, plays the same key louder and louder.

DORIS

That's obnoxious.

CODY

I'm just playing anything.

DORIS

Let me teach you a real song.

CODY

No. That's okay.

Doris' hands guide his hands along the xylophone to play a melody. Lilith lowers her iPhone and watches the taped-up mallet start to unravel.

DORIS

It can't unravel. We just started the song.

Soon the xylophone is completely covered in the flailing mallet stuffing. Doris plays faster.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Hang in there, mallet! Come on!

Cody LAUGHS. Doris' mallet gets stuck between keys, but she continues. The mallet looks like a chopstick.

DORIS (CONT'D)

I better tape it up.

CODY

Keep playing. I'll get the tape.

He exits (toward the kitchen).

DORIS

Hey! Want to try on your new shirt?

CODY (O.S.)

You're not finished with it yet.

DORIS

Can we try it? Otherwise, I won't know
if I'm doing it right.

He reenters with TAPE and tapes the mallet stuffing.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Keep taping around and around.

She holds the shirt up. He takes off the shirt he's wearing
and slips into the new one. The sleeves are too short.

DORIS (CONT'D)

The sleeves are too short.

CODY

That's okay. Lilith -- Doris made me a
short sleeve shirt. Get it?

There's no response.

CODY (CONT'D)

Where'd she go?

DORIS

Lilith?

CODY

Lilith!

(to Doris)

I'll check outside. You check upstairs.

DORIS

We would've seen her if she went
upstairs.

Doris goes upstairs anyway, to search.

EXT. SHACK - SAME

Cody runs outside, jumps off the porch, searches darkness.

CODY

Lilly, it's me. Hey, are we escaping now? I'm ready.

INT. BEDROOM - SHACK - SAME

Doris searches the room.

DORIS

Her suitcase is missing!

The man toy has been left on Doris' pillow.

KITCHEN

Doris flies to the window and sees that the Mercedes is gone. Where it was, Cody paces, pissed.

DORIS

Cody! Her suitcase is gone!

EXT. THERAPY OFFICE - DAY

A sign reads "Dr. Hays, Psychiatrist."

INT. THERAPY OFFICE - DAY

Lilith lies on the couch. Seated DR. HAYS (55, male) takes notes.

LILITH

Cody had many opportunities to steal my car and disappear. He never does.

DR. HAYS

He likes it there?

LILITH

With reason. Doris is completely loveable, and entertaining, and a phenomenal chef. And he adores me.

DR. HAYS

And you love this young man?

LILITH

Yes and I am guiltless since Jon is cheating on me and forbidding me to make any money of my own!

DR. HAYS

You are Jon's prisoner?

LILITH

Evidently I am his prisoner. And Doris as well.

DR. HAYS

Your voice quivered when you said Doris.

LILITH

I am responsible for her. I am required to supply her whatever she requires.

DR. HAYS

And you give Jon what he needs? What does Lilith need?

LILITH

I need a way to give Jon what he needs and give Doris what she needs and give Cody what he needs.

DR. HAYS

Do you really think it is up to you to provide for everyone's needs?

LILITH

Who else is going to?! I have a plan, Dr. Hays. Doris needs a household companion full time and Cody needs a safe place full time. I know how to keep him there forever. Cody needs to love me, in secret, and never leave me. I have a plan.

EXT. VICTORIAN MANOR - DAY

Lilith peeks in the windows, sees Jon and Mary-Ellen standing and talking.

INT. VICTORIAN MANOR - DAY

Lilith enters, and sees Jon and Mary-Ellen talking, her arm around Sal (the mean guard from the first scene).

JON

Look who home in time to put on supper.

Lilith smiles, kisses Jon, hugs Mary-Ellen and Sal.

LILITH

Of course. What are we hungry for?

MARY-ELLEN

Let's leave the husbands to talk police business and we'll whip up something divine.

Mary-Ellen pulls Lilith out of the room.

DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The foursome eat by candlelight. Under the table, Jon and Mary-Ellen hold hands.

FOYER

Mary-Ellen and Sal leave. Jon and Lilith both drop their fake smiles. Lilith searches a pile of mail.

LILITH

Did you appreciate the invitation?

JON

What invitation?

LILITH

To the handicapped boy's surprise birthday party? Where do you think I've been these last couple days? You didn't get that invitation? Lavender with a blue border? I sent it days ago!

JON

We didn't get it.

LILITH

Well, I hate to suspect that new mailman who gives me an attitude. What was his name? Pete, I believe. I caught Pete opening a letter addressed to you.

JON

A mailman opened my mail??

LILITH

Pete. I saw it with my own eyes.

JON

Pete is his name?

LILITH

This Pete and his wife moved to Sunbar County with a nasty attitude.

JON

He needs to be fired.

OFFICE

Lilith types on her computer.

ON SCREEN - A newspaper with Cody's photo and search words: "ESCAPED NORTH CAROLINA PRISON: ERIC HYNDS."

EXT. SHACK - MORNING

Morning flatters the Van Gogh shack. The caterpillar cocoons that Doris painted hatch into BUTTERFLIES.

INT. BASEMENT - SHACK - SAME

Doris runs in, waking Cody.

DORIS

It's Lilith.

CODY

Lilith's back here?

DORIS

She's on the phone. I don't know where she's calling from. She won't tell me.

KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Cody, in his moon shirt, picks up the phone, speaks.

CODY
(into phone)
Where are you?

DORIS
Ask her if she's coming back.

CODY
(into phone)
Lil, are you coming back? ... No? Then
I'm coming there. Where do you live?

The phone goes dead.

CODY (CONT'D)
She hung up!

He slams down the phone.

BASEMENT

He races in, searching for something.

CODY
I had my knapsack down here! Did you
see my bag, Doris?

LIVING ROOM

He searches, and finds his knapsack behind the recliner.
He yanks it up and races out the door.

EXT. SHACK - MINUTES LATER

Cody runs up the dirt road. Doris races to catch him.

CODY
What street does she live on?

DORIS
You have to do swirling! My house is
still crooked on one side!

A CAR approaches. Cody flips out his thumb to hitch-hike.
The car speeds past him.

DORIS (CONT'D)

We'll see her again Saturday in just five more days.

CODY

I have to go to her, Dor.

DORIS

That's a horrible idea.

CODY

Do you care about me or not?

DORIS

The secret's out.

CODY

Then help me.

She won't. He hugs her, then sprints into the blinding sun. She can't see him.

DORIS

Cody!! She lives in a Victorian Manor on the beach!! The white one!!

CODY (O.S.)

Thank you!!

Doris's heart breaks. She exhales deeply, painfully, COUGHS. She removes his hairs taped to her chest - and watches them fly away. She lowers her head in defeat and walks back to the shack. Suddenly she stops, circles both her index fingers around her eyes.

DORIS

If it's true, if I get one magical wish, I wish Cody would come back.

Pete's mail truck approaches. Doris runs to him. Pete throws her mail to her.

DORIS (CONT'D)

I'm working at Neiman Marcus!

PETE

Good for you! Have a nice day!

Pete drives off. When the dust clears, Doris sees a cop car coming from Cody's direction. The car parks. Jon gets out.

DORIS

Jon! ... Hello Jon. I haven't seen Lilith at all.

JON

Look at you, Doris. You did something strange to your hair.

DORIS

It's bleach.

JON

In places. That's what it is.

The sight of the painted shack startles Jon.

JON (CONT'D)

Ain't you been busy?

DORIS

It used to be all crooked.

He examines the shack, trying to understand. Jon reaches into the front seat and pulls out Cody's knapsack, then from it, the Civil War forks.

JON

These forks seemed a wee bit familiar. Got the man who stole them in the car.

Doris is sick. Betrayed. Confused.

JON (CONT'D)

Gonna press charges? ... Probably won't get more than a slap on the hand unless he got a record.

(into car)

Robinhood, you got a record?

CODY (O.S.)

I didn't know those forks were in there! I didn't put them in there!

INT/EXT. POLICE CAR - FOREST ROAD - SAME

Cody wrestles with the HANDCUFFS. Jon's gun pushes against Cody's temple.

JON

You rip my interior and I rip your interior.

EXT. POLICE CAR - SAME

Jon pulls handcuffed Cody out of the police car and throws him onto the dirt road.

CODY

I didn't steal the forks, Doris.

DORIS

I don't have much use for these fancy-dancy forks. The cheap forks are easier to clean.

JON

Robinhood seems to have use for your family heirlooms. Let's go press some charges on his handsome face.

DORIS

I think I remember giving him those forks.

JON

Giving?! Listen, you imbecile, don't you ever give these away!

DORIS

Shove it up your Vulcan ass, Jon! I'm not pressing charges! Let me make you both some waffles.

JON

Lil said to hold Robinhood until she see him. She said she got a feeling he the man that raped her last year.

DORIS

She said that?

CODY

I didn't rape anyone!

Cody spits in Jon's face.

JON

Do it again and I spit a bullet between
your eyebrows.

Cody looks defiant as Jon presses his gun into one of
Cody's eye sockets.

CODY

Shoot me. But I never raped anybody.

JON

We'll see 'bout that. My wife'll be
here in a little bit.

He roughly handcuffs Cody to the porch, then coaxes Doris
inside her house.

INT. KITCHEN - SHACK - DAY - MINUTES LATER

Jon sits down and Doris makes him a waffle.

DORIS

He's not a rapist. He never raped me
and I won Miss Universe twenty years in
a row. I feed him and he paints for me.

EXT. SHACK - DAY - SAME

Rain. Lilith's Mercedes parks too far down to be seen from
the kitchen window. Lilith with purse, in sunglasses and
scarf, scimmages to find Cody, shivering. Rounding the
porch she catches sight of him. Her shadow overtakes him.

LILITH

Are they inside?

CODY

Try one of your car keys to uncuff me.

LILITH

Not part of the plan.

CODY

Plan? Did you put the forks in my bag?

She squats next to him, all the while peering inside the house for movement.

LILITH

Jon will take off the handcuffs. But in one second he can slap them on again and whisk you off to jail for rape.

CODY

Rape? I have an alibi for last year. I was in prison, remember?

LILITH

If rape doesn't get you a life sentence then escaping prison will, Eric Hynds.

CODY

You know my real name? ... Don't do this, Lil.

LILITH

What is going on in that mind of yours? I'm supposed to leave Jon and just elope with you and we'll get jobs at a fast-food place where I'll catch you doing drugs in the walk-in cooler?

CODY

Hey hey. Let's just start with eloping.

LILITH

How are we going to afford to pay for Doris?!

She slaps him so hard his eyes sting with tears.

LILITH (CONT'D)

Did you enjoy that?!

CODY

No. That was mean.

LILITH

I am not being mean. I'm being the adult in the room giving everybody what they need.

CODY

What if John were dead?

LILITH

Are you going to kill John?

Shivering, he looks down. She lovingly touches his face.

LILITH (CONT'D)

You're not going to kill anyone. You're not a killer. You shouldn't have been convicted of Marie's murder but you were and sentenced to life in prison.

CODY

But I broke out.

LILITH

No, Eric Hynds, you clearly did not.

He jerks away. She grabs his arm, jerks him back.

CODY

I can't kill Jon ... but ... you can.

LILITH

You want me to kill Jon?

CODY

Say it's self defense. He beats you.

LILITH

I can't kill anyone.

CODY

He's leaving everything to Mary-Ellen.

LILITH

Mary-Ellen? What did you say??

Cody nods. She is stunned, hurt, collapses to her knees.

LILITH (CONT'D)

That can't be true.

CODY

Someone I know, Mike ... did research.

LILITH (CONT'D)

You are never going to speak to this Mike again. You are never going to keep secrets from me. Ever!! Understand??

She rises, paces, then yanks him up by his wet hair.

LILITH (CONT'D)

And you are never going to leave me!

JON (O.S.)

Is that the asshole?

Lilith turns to see Jon on the porch who is loading his gun.

JON (CONT'D)

Did that riffraff rape you?

LILITH

I'm trying to see.

Doris flies out. Lightning. Thunder.

DORIS

Don't lie, Lilith! Jon'll kill him!

JON

We can handle this, Doris.

CODY

I couldn't have raped her last year! I was ... not in the area.

Doris runs in the line of fire, shielding Cody.

LILITH

He does resemble the young man who assaulted me last year. I don't know.

JON

Is it or ain't it?

LILITH

I don't think it is.

CODY

I would never rape this woman.

JON

You ever lay a finger on my wife and I kill you ten minutes later. Understand?

CODY

Yes, sir.

JON

Say it again.

CODY

I said, yes sir.

JON

I don't like the way you look.

CODY

I wish I could change that, sir.

JON

He looks kinda like one of them escapees, don't he?

DORIS

He didn't escape!

LILITH

No one who escapes a jail would stay within a couple miles of it.

JON

Unless they a moron. Or they want to get caught?! Boy, you ever been in trouble with the law?

CODY

No, sir.

Lilith walks to Jon, puts her hand on his gun.

LILITH

It's not the rapist, Jon. The rapist had much more of a backbone.

DORIS

He's been helping me paint. Don't need a backbone to paint swirls.

CODY

I paint swirls.

DORIS

And he chops firewood.

LILITH

They seem so familiar to each other?

JON

Doris say he Mr. Fix-it and get room-and-board but she a sitting duck with him around, ain't she?

Lilith takes the gun, points it at shivering Cody.

LILITH

You say he's been here? The two of them -- all alone out here? Well, I imagine he would've hurt her already if that was his intention. Don't you think?

JON

Make sense. No doubt the dimwit lonely for company.

DORIS

I am not a dimwit!

JON

Nobody more dimwitted and useless than Doris Adelson. That's why we keep you out of sight!

Jon glares at Doris. Furious Lilith slowly points the gun at Jon's back. He doesn't see. Doris and Cody's eyes enlarge in shock, wondering if Lilith will kill Jon. They want her to. Lilith cries silently as she inches nearer Jon, raising the gun to the back of his head. Thunder. Jon turns, sees the pistol and CHUCKLES. This is her last chance to kill him. She plays with the trigger a long time then LAUGHS and tucks the gun back in his holster. She kisses Jon's cheek.

LILITH

Doris needs company and the shack needs repair, so you don't lose in property value. Why not put the spineless thief to use. He's strong enough to do fix-ups. What do you think we should do?

JON

Doris, you let me know if he act up. The boys and I'll drive by as many times as you want and we be more than happy to teach this bum a lesson or two. If he steal anything else from you I drive over his pretty face.

LILITH

Anything else? What do you mean anything else? She has nothing anybody would want to steal. Does she?

JON

He had the Civil War forks in his bag!

CODY

I didn't steal anything!

LILITH

He did!? Heavens no! We can't let him take those from Doris. Those antiques mean so much to her. You don't think we should keep the forks at our place until he leaves, do you?

Jon smiles, kisses Lilith. Lightning. Thunder.

JON

I do. I do indeed.

DORIS

You're not taking my forks!

Doris runs inside.

LILITH

I'll bring the forks home, Jon.

JON

That's exactly what you gonna do.

In the rain, Lilith and Jon walk toward his police car.

LILITH

Should I grill us steaks tonight?

JON

If you don't burn 'em.

Jon kisses Lilith then drives away in the police car. Lilith runs into the shack.

INT. KITCHEN - SHACK - MINUTES LATER

Doris holds the prized forks tightly into her torso as Lilith inches to her.

LILITH

Jon ordered me to get these out of your house.

Doris tries to run but Lilith holds onto her.

DORIS

Cody won't steal these!

LILITH

Weren't you there when Jon caught him red-handed?

DORIS

Cody doesn't have a use for it. You do!

LILITH

Jon was very adamant about not allowing mother's antique forks and Cody in the same house. That was a direct police order. You decide right now which is more important to you. The forks stay here or Cody does. Police order.

Doris SCREAMS, holds the forks threateningly as if to stab Lilith. Lilith smirks, glares, wrestles the forks away, then grins as she counts them.

LILITH (CONT'D)

I'll stop by in a couple days. I'll bring you a bicycle to get to work.

DORIS

I want a Mercedes.

LILITH

No.

DORIS

I want a helicopter. A yellow helicopter.

LILITH

No, you'll get a bike. A yellow bike.

EXT. SHACK - SAME

Shivering in the heavy rain, sexy Cody swirls paint and sees Lilith passing under him, holding the forks.

CODY

Hey! Those forks aren't yours!

He climbs down.

LILITH

Get back up there and paint! Scoot it!

CODY

You can't boss me around like this!

She makes sure Doris can't see them and Lilith kisses Cody. Very hot sparks. She massages his foot, then slaps an electric ANKLE MONITOR on him.

CODY (CONT'D)

What is this?

LILITH

Paint! I'll be back in a couple days with a bike for Doris.

CODY

I'm your prisoner?

LILITH

And my lover when Doris is at work.

CODY

Boner ... But no, I need to be free!

Doris comes out holding cooked BACON.

DORIS

Cody, have some bacon.

Cody grabs and pretends to choke Doris.

CODY

Give me your keys, Lilith! I'm not gonna let you boss me around like this!

LILITH

You had the keys a dozen times!

Lilith ignores him as he chokes Doris. Lightning. Thunder.

CODY

Like the full moon thing! Doris frowned
-- doesn't that mean she dies?

LILITH

Means she faces death. Not necessarily
dies. That seems to be up to you.

Lilith runs to her Mercedes.

CODY

Don't drive away without me!

She drives away. When her car is out of sight, he releases
his hold. Doris COUGHS but slowly regains her breath.

CODY (CONT'D)

I wasn't going to kill you. I just had
to see if I could get out of here.

DORIS

You can't.

She stuffs the bacon in his pocket.

CODY

I know. I'm stuck here.

She feels sadness with him ... then she smiles realizing her
fantasy romance has returned to her. He paces, furious.

EXT. VICTORIAN MANOR - DAY

Lightning. Thunder. Behind the Victorian manor next to Jon's
police car, the Mercedes parks. Lilith exits excitedly
waving the forks and runs towards the glass back doors.

INT. DINING ROOM - VICTORIAN MANOR - DAY

Lilith enters, immediately spreads the forks on the table.

PETE (O.S.)

Your wife must have imagined it. I
would never open anyone's mail.

JON (O.S.)

Ask around on who I am, boy. You'll
find out my gun don't always stay in
its' holster.

Lilith tiptoes toward the voices in the foyer, spies on Jon facing Pete in the doorway.

PETE

Are you threatening to shoot me??

JON

Lil says to let you know who is boss here so you start behaving appropriate.

PETE

Your wife doesn't behave appropriately.

Lilith steps in, puts her head on Jon's shoulder.

LILITH

Just what is he insinuating??

PETE

What if I told you your wife hangs out at somebody's cruddy little forest shack when you're at work?

LILITH

Jon here owns that cruddy little shack! He pays for my sister to live there! Now you mind your business and stop gossiping or Jon will get you fired and make sure no one else ever hires you.

PETE

What about the Cody dude??

LILITH

Cody is renovating the cruddy little shack for us! We are losing patience with your stories, Mailman, so apologize to us and stick to delivering mail. Say you are sorry.

PETE

Okay, I am sorry.

LILITH

"For opening your mail."

PETE

I did not open your mail.

LILITH

I see your wedding ring. You have a wife here? Where is she employed??

PETE

No, don't cause any trouble for her. I am sorry. For opening your mail. I'll go on with my ruute [route].

He turns to leave. She grabs his shoulder, turns him back.

LILITH

Ruute? In North Carolina, we pronounce it "rowt." I'm rather an expert on accents. Say "Your skin's like porcelain."

PETE

(aghast at her audacity)
Your skin's like porcelain.

LILITH

You're a Midwest farm boy.

PETE

You're right. Midwest where we give gentle massages or something.

Jon takes out his gun, points it at Pete.

JON

Flirt with my wife and I kill you!

Pete runs away into the rain. Lilith grins in triumph.

INT. VICTORIAN MANOR - NIGHT - LATER

Lilith (drunk), Jon, Mary-Ellen and Sal dine by candlelight. Lilith's phone buzzes, she looks down to read a text:

ANKLE MONITOR HAS LEFT DORIS'S PROPERTY.

She hides her devastation.

LILITH

Just my sister. Out of milk.

EXT. VICTORIAN MANOR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

A hooded man peeks in the windows.

INT. VICTORIAN MANOR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Lilith, Jon, Mary-Ellen and Sal dine by candlelight, Jon's gun is on the buffet. Suddenly the hooded man jumps into view - and grabs the gun - aiming the gun at the foursome. Mary-Ellen SCREAMS. Drunk Lilith tries to stand.

LILITH

Cody?? No. No.

Jon puts up his hands.

JON

Let Cody take what he want... Wait,
you're the mailman, ain't ya?

The others keep still as the thief takes their wallets and purses, and rips off their jewelry.

UNDER THE TABLE: Sal hides his own GUN.

The thief searches the buffet drawer, steals several sets of keys. He backs to exit and Sal fires from under the table. The thief falls, YELLS, fires back, hitting Jon's side. Jon goes limp, falls. Sal stands over the thief.

LILITH

No, don't kill him!

Sal shoots the hooded man in the heart. Lilith collapses, cries on the thief's chest. Sal rips off his hood to reveal it is Mike, dead - not Cody. Lilith stumbles away.

SAL

It's that escaped con, Mike something.
Finding out no one escapes prison.

Mary-Ellen SCREAMS holding Jon, who is catatonic.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

Using a sharp rock, shivering Cody cuts off his ankle monitor, then hitchhikes as a lone CAR passes.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Lilith (drunk), Mary-Ellen and Sal listen to a DOCTOR.

DOCTOR

Jon is stable but paralyzed from the neck down at this point.

LILITH

Paralyzed?

DOCTOR

Unable to use his arms or legs.

Mary-Ellen WEEPS. Lilith wipes her eyes, remembers:

FLASHBACK:

INT. BATHROOM - VICTORIAN MANOR - DAY

Lilith circles both index fingers at both eyes and concentrates.

LILITH

My one wish ... is he could never beat me again. Not ever again.

FLASH-FORWARD TO:

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

COYOTES stalk shivering Cody.

JUMP CUT:

Many coyotes growl and bite the air around Cody.

CODY

Back off. What did I ever do to you?

A coyote rips his pocket. He realizes they want the bacon, and he throws the bacon on the road, which they eat.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Coyotes move around Cody's lifeless body laying on grass. But Cody's not dead or in danger, he stares at the sky, petting the coyotes, who sleep next to him, warming him.

CODY

Sky why my tie die pry buy. You guys don't hate rhymers at all. Climbers are tall. First timers can fall.

EXT. SHACK - DAY

Sunny day. Doris sees Cody walking back to the shack.

DORIS

You can't leave! This is your home!

CODY

I know.

He hugs her.

EXT. SHACK - ANOTHER DAY

Doris and Cody garden. A car horn BEEPS. They run to find Lilith directing a TRUCK OF BUILDING SUPPLIES to unload.

INT/EXT. SHACK - DAY - MONTAGE

Lilith directs exhausted Cody to axe down crooked shack walls and then to replace them with straight walls. Lilith and Doris help.

Doris helps sweating Cody update the sinking porch.

Lilith loves the larger windows, contemporary feel.

Cody sits on grass, arms around Lilith and Doris, all pleased with the bright, warm, loving home.

A renovated Cody glows - with purpose and pride.

Doris and Cody watch Lilith push angry Jon in his wheelchair to show him his property value increased.

INT/EXT. RENOVATED SHACK - NIGHT - MONTAGE

Doris picks the year's first tomato.

Doris and Cody eat burgers with the tomato.

Doris and Cody share a couch watching TV.

Lilith parks her car on the dark driveway.

Lilith tiptoes downstairs to the renovated bedroom but does not find Cody.

Lilith searches Doris's renovated upstairs bedroom but

does not find Doris.

Lilith sees Doris and Cody asleep on the living room couch, his arm around her (maybe they were romantic, maybe not). Lilith smiles. She moves to the muted TV, showing news.

The TV NEWS reads, "Things to fear in Sunbar."

TV reads: "#1 Witches."

TV reads: "#2 Missing escaped convict Eric Hynds."

TV shows Cody/Eric's emotional FAMILY MEMBERS being interviewed. Concerned, Lilith shuts off the TV.

Driving home to her beach manor, Lilith hyperventilates.

INT. THERAPY OFFICE - DAY

Frantic Lilith lays on the couch. Seated Dr. Hays listens.

LILITH

Seeing his family I regret trapping him.

DR. HAYS

Does he talk about them much?

LILITH

He never talks about them.

DR. HAYS

What does he talk about?

LILITH

Me, and Doris. Our remodeled home.

DR. HAYS

You shared with me his growth, and Doris' growth. And I see your growth.

LILITH

But Dr. Hays, should I let him go?? I would let him go. If he requires that??

DR. HAYS

If he needs to leave, he'll find a way to leave. Right now he just needs a safe home and to be loved, and appreciated. Just like you do, my dear.

Lilith thinks, nods, showing unprecedented fragility, WEEPS.

LILITH

I'm no better than Jon now. Cody's my prisoner. He's in my prison. When did I become so wicked and deranged?!

Dr. Hays rises, limps, suffering much pain, to the window which has safety bars.

DR. HAYS

Aren't we all in a prison of some sort?

He opens a desk drawer, grabs a PILL BOTTLE, takes PILLS, grabs a LIQUOR BOTTLE, pours two GLASSES.

DR. HAYS (CONT'D)

Isn't the goal just to make our prisons as comfortable as possible?

Lilith reaches for her glass, drinks, wipes her tears.

LILITH

Cody hates the cold so I purchased him an extensive warm wardrobe. He was entirely grateful. Almost in tears telling me how the prison guards used to strip him of his clothes and mattress and bedding, intent to make him freeze! The guards said prison was supposed to punish and inmates were not supposed to be comfortable. Cody replied, "The punishment is being here. We're not supposed to be tortured." He's right, of course. No one should be tortured - although he likes a spanking now and then.

She breathes in relief, then points to her head.

LILITH (CONT'D)

Cody's mind can't escape prison anyway. Guilt in his brain, about an accident that killed his girlfriend. Dr. Hays, if he can't escape anyway, I am giving him the best damn prison he'll ever find.

Tears drip over her smile.

EXT. SHACK - ANOTHER DAY

Wider: on a BRIGHT LIGHT and a scarecrow.

Closer: It's Doris in a taped aluminum foil dress which reflects the sun. She kneels in the garden, picking tomatoes. She's alone except for a scarecrow a few feet away. Wait a minute. That's not a scarecrow, it's Cody in the scarecrow jacket, stretching his arms to his sides.

Cody lowers his arms and kneels beside her and picks tomatoes. Her foil casts sun into his eyes, which he squints then closes. He can't move. It feels good. WARM. Free.

His hand blindly searches for her arm, he holds it still. She turns to him, curious, aroused, heart pumping fast, awaiting an explanation. He tilts his face toward the sun's HEAT, smiling. A happy tear rolls down his cheek.

She follows his lead, tilts her head to the sun, closes her eyes. They smile, WARMING THEIR FACES TOGETHER.

They don't see approaching Lilith, with bags of groceries, smiling when she sees them and their beautiful bond.

Cody opens his eyes and in the sun's glare sees Lilith in bright light, looking like an angel. Eye-contact. He smiles, in love with her. She smiles, in love with him.

THE END

(I have 4 high-rated screenplays, a series treatment and 3 art award shows to sell: AMERICAN ART AWARDS, WORLD ART AWARDS, ART COLLECTORS CHOICE AWARDS. Please see 1 minute intro here: <https://www.thombierdz.com/intro/>)