

DINNER PARTY

A collaborative writing project  
brought to you by Macabre Monday

## SETTING

Dining room of the ANTHESTERIAN ARMS. A remote mansion set in the hills. The enigmatic dinner party begins as guests arrive and are seated at the table. Conversation begins.

## TIME

There is no particular time period. It's timeless and unimportant. The guests begin to arrive at twilight. The dinner continues late late late into the evening.

## ACT I

### SCENE 1

*(Lights up on a lavish dining room and a long table with place settings for many guests. An enormous chandelier hangs low over the table, there are paintings and portraits on the wall, there is a fireplace with a mantle of books, there are dark red velvet curtains on the walls where the wait staff, silently enter and exit. At the entrance to the room stands the Maitre d', Thebes, welcoming the guests as they arrive)*

THEBES

*(checks his pocket watch, and welcomes the first guest)*

Good Evening, welcome to the Dinner Party. Can I take your coat?

CPT ELSON

No, B'ye, I'll keep me coat, beggin' yer pardon, kind sir. Easy for an old man to catch a chill, be he on the sea or otherwise.

*(Removes his cap and bows deeply for a moment)*

Captain Harland Elson at your service, sir, and may I say I thank you for your kind invitation! Am I the first to arrive? A ship's clock ne'er was useful if it wasn't followed, mind! I hope I've not come too early--though I'll welcome a chance to get to know your grace before the other guests arrive behind me.

THEBES

Very well Sir, we've seated you fireside. Anticipated the chill. The other guests should be arriving presently. Please make yourself comfortable. The staff will be happy to help, though I should tell you that they can not-err do not speak during service. My name is Thebes, and I will be happy to answer any of your questions

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Enters through the door)*

Here is my coat, sir. Please hang it away from the others. It is vital I avoid cross-contamination for the good of my patients.

Now, as to--

*(He catches sight of CPT ELSON)*

Good God! He has a severed leg?

THEBES

*(Takes the doctors coat and quietly instructs staff to hang it outside)*

Very well sir, please be seated, there, across from the captain

DR MOREAU-WEBB

Of course, but first I must beg an indulgence of the Captain.

*(To CPT ELSON)*

Forgive my outburst, sir, but is your wound fully healed? I understand my impudence in asking, but I can ill afford any risk of transferring an infection or suppuration.

CPT ELSON

*(Wheezes in loud barking laughter, slapping his right knee)*

Nay sir, this leg is fully attached and troubles me not! How are your wounds, good doctor? Sittin' 'cross from me, I hope ye don't plan on "transferring" nothin my way, neither! If you don't spit in my soup I shan't spit in yours, are we agreed?

THEBES

*(rolls eyes and checks his watch again)*

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Sits, looking a little stunned)*

I have no wounds. And I do not spit, sir. And my life, I assure you, is devoted to preventing the spread of pestilence, not its transfer.

CHERRY KILLS

*(Enters the room like she's on a walkthrough tour, touching the intricate patterns on the wood molding)*

This is something. Oh, hello...um...can I get a cocktail?

That's quite the smile, do that shaving?

*(Cherry nods to the Thebes's scar)*

There's something about a scar on a man—makes them look more equipped, you know what I mean? No need for ice, vodka if you have it. Where is the powder room? I don't need to go right now, but I like to know where it's at, y'know? Big glass, maybe a little ice, and a sparkling water. Real sausage party here so far, am I the only lady coming this evening? If so, I think I'll take my din-din to go. Unless you've got me by the fire.

You smell nice.

*(Leans in and takes a delicate sniff of Thebes's lapel)*

THEBES

*(helps CHERRY KILLS with her coat)*

Miss Cherry, your reputation precedes you, and does not disappoint, I might add.

*(ignores the scar question and hand signals a large vodka with ice to the staff, then points to the seat next to the Captain)*

You'll be comfortable here, fireside by the captain, I'm sure.

The ladies room is through there

*(motions to a curtain at the far end of the room)*

I'm sure the other women will be here shortly, I think you'll find a natural gender balance this evening.

*(THEBES smiles a rare smile and his scar curls dramatically on his cheek)*

CHERRY KILLS

*(cocks an eyebrow, walks around the table, runs her fingers just over Dr Moreau-Webb's shoulder but doesn't touch him. She looks*

*up at the paintings that line the wall, then moves quickly past the Captain and takes her seat at the table)*

Looks like you've seen Moby's dick. Name's Cherry.

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Stands and executes a short, formal bow to Cherry)*

Enchanté, Mademoiselle. Claude Moreau-Webb at your service. I trust you are well?

CPT ELSON

*(Nodding in acknowledgement to CHERRY)*

You'll pardon me fer not lifting me cap, Miss Cherry, as I reserve that courtesy for proper ladies who don't talk like sailors. The Doctor gave you enough pomp fer the both of us, anyhow. Captain Elson, if you please! Me and Webb here were just talkin' 'bout which of us was gonna spit in the others soup. Who do you think it will be, eh?

*(Wheezes another fit of loud laughter.)*

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Looks briefly furious, then visibly wrests control of himself)*

The Captain jokes, of course. And perhaps does so to remind me that this is an evening of festivity. Will you join me in a bottle, Captain? Any drink stronger than small beer is safe enough to share hygienically. What is your poison, sir?

*(To THEBES)*

The Captain and I wish to toast the Mademoiselle. Would you please bring us glasses and a bottle of the Captain's choice?

CPT ELSON

Aye, I knew I liked you Dr. Webb, a man after me own tastes. I'll help you empty a bottle o' fine Scotch, though I'd rather toast the host than shame the dame. Beggin' yer pardon Miss, of course.

*(He winks his good eye at DR. MOREAU-WEBB)*

Let's see if we can't preserve our dignity till the rest of these chairs are filled!

CHERRY KILLS

Well, Captain, I may not be a proper lady, but that's only because I don't know what that means. A proper gentleman, I certainly know what that looks like, and Claude boy over here, he's it.

(winks at Cpt Elson)

Claude, what a great name. Reminds me of Claudette Colbert-Cleopatra, 1934! She's the inspo for these eyebrows. My aunt says they make me look like I'm always surprised, and well, maybe I am. Is that so bad? Life, it's full of them.

(looks up at the chandelier and smiles)

And yes, Claude, I'm quite well. Thank you for asking.

And please, boys, can we not spit in the soup?

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(speaking from the entry hall the next room over, bristling from the chill outside, having overheard)*

Does someone here have arthritis? Spitting in soup is good for rheumatism.

(beat)

So I've heard.

THEBES

*(motions staff to get table wine)*

Welcome Miss Berrycloth. I'll take your coat. Please have a seat next to the good doctor

*(motions to the doctor)*

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(a little sheepishly)*

Thank you, but that won't be necessary, sir. I don't own one.

*(Indeed, it did appear as though she had arrived at the event in nothing but a simple dress - no coat to be seen. She nervously takes her seat at the table, clearly a bit uncomfortable in such lavish company.)*

THEBES

*(squints at Felicity and waves off the staff circling her, looking for a coat)*

*(four bottles of wine now dot the table and a bottle of scotch appears beside the Captain)*

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Stands and bows equally formally to FELICITY before sitting again)*

Mademoiselle, it is my pleasure to be at your service. Your theory on saliva as a cure for rheumatism is most intriguing. One is, of course, familiar with the spectacle of animals licking their wounds to encourage healing. This raises the possibility of the transmission of not just pestilence, but also of beneficial humours, a most novel hypothesis. I greatly look forward to conversing with you over the evening. Have you transferred much saliva previously?

CPT ELSON

*(Spotting Felicity, removes his cap briefly, looking annoyed at DR MOREAU-WEBB)*

Webb, yer fixin' to be up and down like a whack-a-mole for every lady what enters this hall.

*(Pouring himself a generous glass of scotch, now speaking to no one in particular)*

Our friend Thebes chose to sit me opposite a cook and a quack--Message received, Thebes, message received! I'll be needin' this elixir 'ere the night waxes long.

*(offers DR MOREAU-WEBB the bottle of scotch)*

Webb, you still thirsty?

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(beginning to wonder if coming here was a mistake after all... these were some rather unusual folks to be spending the evening with. An "educated doctor"? Someone with a distaste for cooks? She clears her throat.)*

I've done no such thing, Mister, um- Webb. It's an old wives' tale and nothing more.

DR MOREAU-WEBB

Ah, but there is often truth in the old ways. We are descended from those of our ancestors who knew how to survive, are we not? Knowledge has become obscured through the centuries. I sometimes think we men of science are merely rolling back the hidden veil of time, not advancing into the future.  
And Captain, fill mine to the brim, if you will.

CHERRY KILLS

(pours a glass of wine)

Wine after vodka, never better. That's the saying, right?

Hello, other lady. I like your bun. I never could pull one off. My mother—rest in power—said that my ears looked like that kid from Gummo. Remember that scene where he's eating the spaghetti in the tub? She said I'd look like that with my hair up. But you, it suits you well.

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

*[Enters the dinner party's atrium. She looks around. Waiting for someone to come and greet her. She checks her hairdo in the mirror hanging near the doorway, murmuring to herself]*

So, glad to get away from that depressing ass house! I'm ready to meet a few friends and see where it goes

THEBES

Good Evening Ma'am, can I take your coat?

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

Yes.

*[She strips off her squirrel coat and hands it to Thebes.]*

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

Hi. My name is Dee Pressdt. I forget what place I am sitting at. Will you be so kind to help?



THEBES

Certainly, Miss Pressdt, you are seated beside Miss Berrycloth and Doctor Moreau-Webb. Please make yourself comfortable and enjoy the company

(addressing the table)

I'd like to let you know about our specialty cocktails this evening. We have

*The Abyssal Bloom -Black vodka, squid ink, elderflower liqueur, and a dash of sea salt. Served with a garnish of edible violet petals*

*A Phoenix Fizz -Saffron-infused gin, blood orange juice, honey syrup, champagne, and a sprinkle of edible gold dust. Garnished with a dehydrated blood orange wheel.*

*Whispering Woods -Birch sap vodka, vermouth infused with wild mushrooms, a hint of truffle oil, and a few drops of green Chartreuse. Garnished with a sprig of thyme.*

*The Siren's Lure -Blue pea flower-infused rum, coconut water, lime juice, and a dash of lavender syrup. Served with a rim of crushed pearl sugar.*

*And the Devil's Breath Martini -Chili pepper-infused tequila, dragon fruit puree, lime juice, agave nectar, and a smoked salt rim. Garnished with a slice of jalapeno*

*(the chandelier flickers)*

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

*I'll have the The Abyssal Bloom. I like purple. The violets caught my attention. Thanks.*

CHERRY KILLS

One Phoenix, extra fizz.

(beat)

I haven't had any fruit yet today.

LILITH HART

*(Lingers by the door, arms crossed)*

Did I hear something about squid ink?

THEBES

*(to Lilith Hart)*

Ah Miss Hart, good evening. We've got you here at the corner. I'm sure your neighbors will be here soon. Can we hang up your coat?

*(to Cherry)*

Coming presently

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Downs a glass of whisky)*

I believe the whispering woods are calling to me.

THEBES

*(to Dr. Moreau-Webb)*

Ah very good Doctor. It's probably my favorite.

*(motions to staff with frenetic hand signals)*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK: *(Enters through door and smiles at the sight of people and the sound of lively conversation. She removes her homespun shawl and stuffs it in an empty sack.)*

*Smells like my grandkids' parties at New Years!*

THEBES

*(to BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK)*

Evening Ma'am, a pleasure to see you this evening. And may I say, that's a lovely shawl. We've got you over here beside the Captain. I hope fireside is okay?

*(the cocktails arrive for CHERRY KILLS and DR. MOREAU-WEBB)*

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(having been more focused on observing her fellow guests and host than considering her cocktail order, growing slightly suspicious)*

I know we may be waiting on a few more people but... is everyone here not acquainted, already? I was a last-minute invite due to

an unfortunate 'tractor accident,' however I thought I would be the fish out of water. Do... do none of us know each other?

CPT ELSON

*(sipping deeply from his glass of scotch)*

Aye, I know of one or two a ye, but nary a close friend nor relation in sight. I had to examine me invitation closely, afeared as I was it was sent to me by mistake. But no, it was addressed to me by name.

*(whispering, conspiratorily)*

I'm more a man of the open sea, I take omens same as the lot of ye, and I tell ye, "Thebes" is an ill portend, mark me. Here's hoping our dinner party fares better than that city did under the wrathful gaze of Alexander.

*(more casually again)*

But as long as the Scotch keeps flowing I doubt I'll mind o'ermuch whate'er fate awaits the evening.

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

*(To THEBES) Fireside will do nicely. (Takes her seat and stuffs her sack under her chair.)*

*(To FELICITY) You young people do give me a smile. Always worried about who knows who. Just don't forget who is who, or we'll start fussing over you!*

CHERRY KILLS

*(to FELICITY) I've never met any of these people. Like El Capitan here, I thought they mixed me up with someone else. I just went with it.*

*(the cooing of a pigeon is heard)*

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Stands and bows to LILITH and BRENDA. Appears about to speak then pauses and listens, looking uncertain)*

Was that a bird?

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(immediately seems locked-on in the direction of the coo)*

That was a pigeon.

(beat)

...I look after a lot of them. I would know.

ALDEROSE "ROSIE" AIKEN

*(She slinks in, unnoticed she believes, behind the other guests. She takes advantage of the pigeon commotion.)*

*Seeing her spot, she sits to the left of DR. CLAUDE MOREAU-WEBB and across CHERRY KILLS. Unsure what to do, she keeps her coat on and awkwardly places a large bouquet of lotus and azaleas beneath her seat. She tries and fails to subtly stare at CHERRY KILLS. She is openly fascinated by her.)*

*(To no one in particular) S'cold this evening.*

LILITH HART

*(Shrugging off a sheet black shawl and handing it to Thebes while speaking in a monotone voice.)*

If we're still doing cocktails, I'll take the squid ink. Hopefully its inky blackness reflects the darkness of my soul.

CPT ELSON

*(to ALDEROSE AIKEN, tipping his hat politely)*

Aye, Cold but the fires warm and the whiskeys warmer. Better fill your glass afore Webb bows at you. Who are ye, whose coming is heralded by the cooing of pigeons?

*(to FELICITY)*

Dare I ask why a cook has so many pigeons?

ROSIE AIKEN

*(to CAPT. ELSON) ALDEROSE AIKEN, pleased to make your acquaintance. You can just call me ROSIE.*

*(She looks around curiously.) Pigeon, you say?*

*(ROSIE looks down the table toward FELICITY)*

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(to Cpt. Elson, curtly, clearly not willing to give too much away)*  
A woman is allowed her hobbies.

*(to Rosie)*

Yes, there was the sound of a pigeon just now. How odd. I thought I knew where it was coming from, but now I'm not so sure. Did anyone else hear it? Or see it, even?

CPT ELSON

*(With wheezing laughter)*

Must be coming from the kitchens, hey? HA!

CHERRY KILLS

Pretty name, Rosie. Do you carry flowers everywhere you go? I would, if I had that name. Well, if we don't eat something soon, I'm going to eat those lovely azaleas right off your plate.

ALDEROSE AIKEN

*(to CHERRY KILLS)* Thank you.

*(Her hand self-consciously reaches down to brush the top of the bouquet)*

*(her tone is strained and quiet)* I bring flowers when I go somewhere new. There's always an occasion for flowers.

CHERRY KILLS

*(looking at the bouquet)*

Do you choose which flowers you bring by the occasion?

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

*[sitting down next to Doctor Moreau-Webb]*

Hello. Doctor Moreau-Webb. How are you tonight?

*[turning to Miss Berrycloth]*

Hello, Miss Berrycloth. Are you important, like the DR MOREAU-WEBB., here?

*[thumbing to the Dr. With a snoddy attitude]*

THEBES

*(swooshing through a red curtain)*

Apologies Miss Aiken, I was dealing with—err something in the cellar. I see you've found your place, I'll take your coat. By the way

*(to everyone)*

We have an extensive selection of wine downstairs, please don't hesitate to ask for anything specific, chances are we have it.

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

I'm still waiting on my drink, Thebes.

THEBES

*(hurrying over with an Abyssal Bloom to Mrs Pressdt)*  
Terribly sorry miss, we had a little hiccup at the bar. Nothing to worry about though. Really.

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

Thank you Thebes. What type of hiccup?

[takes a sip of her drink. Smacks lips. With a pop of the tongue.]

This here is pretty good!

[guzzles it down]

Can I have another, Thebe?

[slurring her words]

You gwot any help, 'roun' here? When will dinna be swerved?

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(with a small smirk toward DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE's comment)*

I should certainly hope not. Would you excuse me for a moment?

*(she gets up from her chair, looking around the lavishly decorated room, straining her ears for another coo or the flap of a birdwing)*

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

[commenting on the attitude of FELICITY BERRYCLOTH]

Well! That was rude! She didn't even say, excuse me.

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

(To DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE) Looks like you just lost your table partner *(glances at FELICITY)*, and I still don't have mine *(glances at empty seat to her left)*. But I feel like I've seen that Rosie woman before. Does she look familiar to you?

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

[to BRENDA SHTILSHPANK]

Yes. It looks as I have... No worries though. No. I have never seen that Rosie woman before. By the way, my name is Dee Pressdt. And you are?

ROSIE AIKEN

*(to CHERRY KILLS with a cryptic half-smile) always.*

*(She allows THEBES to take her coat)*

*(To THEBES) I've brought a gift.*

*(ROSIE scoops up the flowers and hands them to THEBES). I hope you find them appropriate.*

*(Hearing her name, ROSIE looks down and tries to listen over the table conversation. It is difficult.)*

THEBES

They're quite exquisite. Your attention to detail is obvious. I've never seen anything quite like this arrangement. Thank you.  
*(Takes flower bundle and hands it off to staff with a nod)*

LILITH HART

*(To Thebes)*

If you're not able to bring that squid ink beverage you mentioned, I'll take your deepest, darkest red wine.

*(Leaning toward the other guests present)*

Is one of you our host? I would like to know which person I should slightly concern myself with not offending.

*(the staff bring Lilith a squid ink cocktail and a red wine)*

LILITH HART

Ah! Even better. This should be an evening to remember.

VAN BECKON:

*(poking his head into the dining area.)*

Sorry I'm late gang-spent darn near all afternoon digging out the 'ole truck.

This looks like a great program, for sure.

*(he strolls into the room like it's his childhood home, a canvas bag slung over one shoulder, and a pyrex container in his hands.)*

Didn't know if I should bring anything, so I made hot dish.

*(Van leans over the end of the table to set down the food he brought, accidentally nudging LILITH HART in the process.)*

*(to LILITH)*

Oh! Sorry 'bout that, eh.

LILITH HART

*(Voice dripping in irony)*

Is "hot dish" a technical term, or are you commenting on the temperature?

CHERRY KILLS

Well this party gets more and more interesting. What's in the dish, Grizzly Adams?

(she takes her index finger and wipes the condensation from her cocktail glass. Wipes the moisture on her cheek)

Cheeks get hot when I drink.

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Has been contemplating the frankly exquisite presentation of his cocktail which seems to almost glow with a faint, green light. He stands and bows to Dee, Lilith, Brenda, and Rosie in turn. He raises his cocktail in a toast.)*

To our very good health. *(He sips from the whispering woods.)*  
Thebes, this is superb. It tastes of the air in the old forests of Alsace, where I spent my childhood. You know some of the woods have lain there uncleared for millenia? They must have borne witness to the ways and rituals of times gone from our memory.

*(He turns to Dee)*

Madam, you are kind to think me important. Yet it is not me, but rather the knowledge I was able to glean from my Professor before his untimely death that is truly vital. It may yet be the salvation of us all, if only I can achieve the breakthrough he was so close to.

THEBES

*(Nods and smirks/grimaces to the doctor)*

*(To Van Beckon)*

Welcome sir, may we take your bag and take care of your dish? You really shouldn't have.

*(To everyone)*

Please peruse the menu in front of you. We will have a shared feast of hot and cold dishes soon when the other guests arrive. I am sure there will be something for everyone.

RUHANA BEGUM

*(Striding in the door)*

*(Her eyes widen at the sight of so many guests already seated)*

I seem to be quite late. Forgive me ladies and Gentlemen. If someone could take my coat, please.



DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

[to RUHANA BEGUM]

Where would you like your coat taken to? Is it squirrel? Ha! Ha!

[stumbling drunkardly off. Yelling for THEBES]

Thwebes! I need another dwink! And Miss lady here, Wants somebody to take (hic) her coat.

RUHANA BEGUM

(Steps aside to avoid touching Mrs. Depressed)

(Looks around for Thebes, fidgeting at the stares from guests)

(To everyone)

Where is Mr. Thebes?

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

[to RUHANA BEGUM]

I no know... [slurring] I'm tryna fin' him now. [as she stumbles Off]

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Stands and bows to RUHANA)*

Our host was here moments ago. I am sure he will return without delay, he has been most attentive so far. In the meantime, Claude Moreau-Webb, at your service, Madam. Please don't wait for the Captain there to stand on ceremony. He won't, as he has a gammy leg. Wherever it is.

*(Claude giggles to himself as he sits down and takes another sip of whispering woods. The green hue of the cocktail is reflected in his eyes.)*

THEBES

Apologies all, we seem to have a pigeon in the parlour. It's being handled. I will take your coat Ma'am and the staff will be happy to take your drink order. I can assure you, you are not late. Please have a seat here at the corner fireside. Make yourself comfortable.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(Bursts into the dining room, flustered, drowning in sweat. He bumps THEBES but pays it no mind)

Am I late? Did I just hear someone say I was late? Oh Gods, I'm late, aren't I?

(He was hoping to be more discreet in his entry, but his brazenness has effectively alerted the whole room)

[to anyone who will listen]

Father would never forgive me for this dis-punctuality. I must give you all my utmostest apologies.

(He's so anxious he forgets to shake any hands or tell anyone his name, instead opting to slick back his already slicked back hair. His jacket rattles with every movement)

THEBES

You are not late sir. We have one more guest coming though I fear we will be starting our service shortly without them. Please have a seat and uh relax a moment King Salington.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To the empty chair of DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE) Duck.

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

Owww!

(To the empty chair of FELICITY) Duck.

(To the temporarily unoccupied chair of RUHANA BEGUM)

Goose.

(To CAPTAIN'S WANDERING GLASS EYE on her right) We elderly folk are the anchor of civilization.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

[To THEBES]

King Salington? Oh, of course! Haha. I'm Sten, but my father and I do look very much alike. King was supposed to be here, but he found himself... unavailable... at the last minute and I am here to take his place. All that said, I forgive your mistake.

(Pats THEBES on the shoulder before heading to his seat. He's desperately trying to make eye contact with the others at the table, but anytime it looks like someone will speak to him he diverts his gaze back to the floor)

CPT ELSON

(To BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK)

Aye, that we are--I wonder if our host knew to seat us together so we could tame the wee ones, HA! Cheers to bein' the only adults with nary a hubris nor idiosyncrasy.

*(His glass eye spirals wildly after saying this, as he takes a sip from his scotch--the glass always seems to be full)*

CPT ELSON

*(To STEN SALINGTON, after overhearing the explanation to THEBES)*

Be this King Salington? Nay, this must be 50% Off Salington!

*(Wheezing laughter, fumbling to tip his cap)*

Welcome to the party, sir, Captain Elson if you please--we're all either half in the bag or half curious why this band of misfits has been here assembled.

*(To those in his proximity)*

Now, did I hear someone mention a squirrel? Reminds me of the time I went for a long haul fishin' run, and some poor squirrel stowed away on me boat. Let me tell ye, he was about the worst first-mate one could ask for on a long voyage, doubt ye not! HA!

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

[to CPT ELSON]

Yep. Me. You wanna be startin' something? Don't nobody. I mean NOBODY! Mess with the squirrels!

[as she rolls her eyes and walks away]

CHERRY KILLS

(To CPT ELSON)

What became of the squirrel?

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

*(Upon discovering she has no beverage with which to cheers CPT ELSON, motions to a staff member)*

I'll take a white wine. Maybe you have one from the Alsace region? Wherever that one *(motions toward CLAUDE MOREAU-WEBB)* is from since he speaks so highly of his home.

CPT ELSON

Let me just say that I caught one of the biggest tuna I'd e'er caught on that voyage, if ye catch me drift.

*(CPT ELSON winks his good eye at CHERRY)*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To CAPTAIN)

Now that's fishing 2 for the price of 1. My kind of sale! I wonder what kind of seasoning pairs with tuna...and squirrel? Ha! A fine tale.

CHERRY KILLS

(makes an exaggerated pouty face)

Poor squirrel.

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

Hi ya CPT ELSON! [slurring]

[stumbling by]

CPT ELSON

You'd have to be nuts to try it!

*(Wheezing laughter)*

Oh come now Miss Cherry, 'twas a mercy for I had no way to keep a squirrel safe and alive for two weeks in the middle o' the sea. Better this way than watching it starve slowly to death waitin' fer dinner to be served--I mean, waitin' to return ashore.

*(He sips deeply from his Scotch)*

CHERRY KILLS

(looks into CPT ELSON'S eyes intently)

Mercy, yes. I suppose you're right. It did deserve mercy.

(raises her glass)

To mercy.

CPT ELSON

Aye I'll drink to that. To Mercy! Mercy on us all, and Ha' Mercy on us, Thebes, these menus promise octopus and th' more I drink th' more it calls to me. Even this far from the ocean, the sea finds me!

DR MOREAU-WEBB

Yes, Thebes, bring le vin d'Alsace. A dry Riesling if you will. One from old vines.

*(He finishes his cocktail).*

There were things in those forests. And things done. Creatures. Rituals. The Ma...

*(beat)*

I should not speak of them.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(to CLAUDE MOREAU-WEBB)*

As long as one of the "things done" included winemaking, I'm satisfied! Keep the young ones occupied with hard work, that's what they need.

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Laughs hysterically, then gets a hold of himself).*

Winemaking. Yes, indeed. Among other things. But tell me, Madame Schtilshpank, do you know of any old remedies for pestilence? Cures, or ways to prevent spread? Any old practices remembered from your childhood, perhaps?

CHERRY KILLS

*(coughing fit)*

Thebe's-*cough*-can I get another-*cough*-Phoenix Fizz?

RUHANA BEGUM

*(Returns DR MOREAU-WEBB's bow with her own small one)*

*(Gives her coat to Thebes)*

Thank You, Sir. Just water, please.

*(Takes her seat and gives a wary look to Mrs. Depressed)*

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

*[to RUHANA BEGUM]*

Hi ya toots!

*[as she licks the rim of her glass. Still waiting for THEBES to give a re-fill. She gets up and almost stumbles on RUHANA BEGUM] Sowry... I wost my balwance dere, for a mo...ment! (hic)*

*[DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE stumbles away to find Thebes]*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(To MOREAU-WEBB)*

You at least have the decency to ask your elders. More than I can say for some of the others at this table. Earlier I overheard you saying you eat spit. Now that, I must correct.

Don't eat spit, son. But feel free to use it for a variety of other purposes, such as applying it to wounds. Much like a dog who licks its wounds and rapidly heals.

CPT ELSON

Ye can lick yer wounds and ye can lick yer friends but ye can't lick yer friends wounds, as they say. Or somethin' like that.  
*(Wheezing laughter)*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(To CPT ELSON)*

I couldn't have said it better.

RUHANA BEGUM

*(gives an amused look to BRENDA)*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(To RUHANA)*

You are a welcome addition to this table, my dear. And...oh! You look familiar, too! I daresay I believe I have seen you before. You and that woman Rosie both look so familiar. Do we know each other?

RUHANA BEGUM

*(To BRENDA)*

I am afraid you are wrong, Ma'am. I haven't had the pleasure to make your acquaintance before.

CHERRY KILLS

*(To the table)*

Anyone got a light? I only smoke when I drink.

RUHANA BEGUM

*(Gets out a small lighter from her purse and gives it to BRENDA to pass to CHERRY)*

Here you go.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(To RUHANA)*

*(Passes lighter to CPT ELSON)*

Silly me! I must be imagining. I spend all day watching the news, how could I think I know these folks when I hardly ever go out on social engagements! Well, nevertheless I am quite happy to have another lady at this end of the table!

CHERRY KILLS

(To RUHANA BEGUM)

Thanks doll. Welcome to the family. Name's Cherry.

RUHANA BEGUM

(To CHERRY)

Pleasure. My name is Ruhana.

(Turns her head to talk to BRENDA)

I have been on the news lately. Maybe you have seen me there.

(Gives a tight smile to the old lady)

CHERRY KILLS

(Winks at ROSIE as she hides the lighter beneath her napkin)

RUHANA BEGUM

(Notices CHERRY keeping her lighter)

Can I have that back?

(Stretches her arm out directly to CHERRY)

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To RUHANA)

Well, that explains it! I'm glad I am still sound of mind! This confirms it.

CHERRY KILLS

(To RUHANA)

I was just hiding it from Thebes. I didn't want him to know I was going to smoke in the powder room. Something about this place tells me it would be frowned upon.

(Tosses the lighter down the length of the table)

RUHANA

(Glares at CHERRY as she thumbs her father's lighter before keeping it back in her purse)

It is frowned upon to smoke when you are in public.

(To BRENDA)

The media has not been kind to my family for the past few months.

CHERRY KILLS

(Leaning forward, looking down the table at RUHANA)  
That's where I know you from! Well, for what it's worth, I think they're being too hard on you. Family can be tricky-I can't imagine being in business with a sibling. Or anyone, for that matter.

RUHANA BEGUM

(She looks at the ceiling)  
Allah bless us all!

THEBES:

(frantically hand signaling staff, like he's having a seizure, Cocktails, wine and a new bottle of scotch appear for the guests)

(to everyone)

I'm happy to see you are all getting acquainted. Our Amuse-bouche will be served in a moment. Family style- for the table. Our last guest will arrive later this evening. And I'd like to say, on behalf of your host. Eat and drink well this evening, they hope it'll be an evening you'll never forget.

*(to MOREAU-WEBB holding a bottle)*

I hope this Domaine Weinbach Riesling Alsace Grand Cru will do?

CPT ELSON

*(Loudly raising a glass)*

Cheers to our fair host, Mr. Thebes, fer keeping us drunk and now fillin' our bellies. Thank ye fer bringing us together, kind sir!

THEBES

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I present our bite sized delicacies this evening.

*Hibiscus and Lavender-Infused Goat Cheese Tartlets  
Charred Octopus Tentacle with black garlic aioli  
Venison Carpaccio with juniper berry dressing  
Smoked Eel Mousse on rye crisps*



*Dragon Fruit and Sea Urchin Ceviche in ice sculpture*  
*Pickled Cobra Hearts with a hint of sake and ginger*

Bon Appetit!

*(the staff in unison place dishes across the table)*

DR MOREAU-WEBB

Magnifique, Thebes.

*(He pours a glass of the wine for BRENDA, and then himself)*

Would anyone else care to try? It is truly exceptional.

THEBES

*(inconspicuously delivers a small pot of honey and spoon beside CHERRY's cocktail)*

CHERRY KILLS

*(whispers)*

Thanks, Thebes. I think it just went down the wrong pipe, as they say. But maybe I'll add a little, just for the flavor.

THEBES

*(leaning in and whispering back to CHERRY)*

It's Pitcairn Honey, quite rare.

CHERRY KILLS

*(dips her pinky finger in the honey and sucks it off)*

Tastes like honey.

*(takes a bite of the Hibiscus and Lavender-Infused Goat Cheese Tartlets)*

Thebes, this goat cheese is something else.

*(To DR MOREAU-WEBB)*

Hey Doc, pass me a glass of that white you like so much!

DR MOREAU-WEBB

My pleasure, mademoiselle.

*(He pours her a glass)*

You have an unusual name. Do you indulge in nominative determinism? Or to put it another way, does Cherry kill?

*(He takes a cobra heart on a plate and sniffs it suspiciously).*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To THEBES)

May I have a paper plate?

*(Clinks a glass near RUHANA with her wine glass)*

(To RUHANA) Cheers to being table partners! What will you choose first, from this assortment of snacks?

RUHANA BEGUM

(Takes a sip from her glass of water)

(To BRENDA) Cheers! Can you pass the cheese tartlets please.

CHERRY KILLS

(To DR MOREAU-WEBB)

My mother named me Cherry, and since she said that I'm the reason my father is dead, I went with it. Cherry Kills.

RUHANA BEGUM

(Chokes on her water a bit before settling down)

THEBES

*(to BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK)*

Uh certainly, we'll have a look.

*(signs to staff)*

CHERRY KILLS

*(sneezes)*

Apologies, I believe it's the dry air. Wreaks havoc on my sinuses.

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

*[to CHERRY KILLS]*

Bless you honey. Are you allergic to squirrel? I loves me a squirrel! I just do!

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(seeing that the first of the food is beginning to arrive, returns to the table with a slight frown)*

I couldn't find it. I'm **certain** I heard a pigeon, however. I do hope it's not trapped indoors.

*(she takes her seat once again. Then, to CHERRY)*

Bless you. Ginger root is excellent to ward off impending illness.

*(beat)*

So I hear.

THEBES

*(to BRENDA placing a plate on top of her existing china plate)*  
Unfortunately, we don't carry plates in paper, but hope this bamboo dish will suffice. It is both lightweight and durable, not to mention eco-friendly

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(To THEBES)*

Thank you, honey. That will do.

*(BRENDA places the bamboo plate awkwardly next to her china plate, between her and CPT ELSON. She passes a cheese tartlet to RUHANA, with her fingers she places another one on FELICITY's plate across from her, a third one on her china plate, and a fourth on her bamboo plate).*

*(To FELICITY)*

Welcome back, dear.

CHERRY KILLS

*(To FELICITY BERRYCLOTH)*

It's nothing. Just allergies, I'm sure. But thanks.

*(spoons honey into her cocktail)*

I heard the pigeon, too. Looking at the appetizer course, I assumed it was to be the Entrée.

*(the flames in the fireplace surge unexpectedly, brightening the room and warming a few bottoms)*

DR MOREAU-WEBB

There is ginger in the hearts. That along with the pickling will prevent any transmission of parasites.

*(He takes a bite, chews with gusto, and swallows)*

Most piquant.

*(To FELICITY BERRYCLOTH)*

Why do you doubt your knowledge, Mademoiselle?

*(Debussey's Syrinx starts to play, though it's origin is unclear, it seems to be coming from the room itself)*

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(barely hearing DR. MOREAU-WEBB'S question, instead becoming increasingly on edge at the semi-magical or at least uncanny events that appear to be unfolding in the room around them. She is unsure if she is answering his question or merely thinking aloud when she says)*

Witchcraft. Such things are often considered witchcraft.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(To FELICITY)*

Honey, some free advice. Get yourself a man. I don't see any ring on those fingers. It'll do you good and calm your nerves. Now eat some cheese tartlet and quit your worrying. *(notices cheese melting)*.

CPT ELSON

*(trying to figure out whether octopus is finger food or fork food)*

Well, so far this here is the second oddest dinner party I've e'er attended, the first being on a small island of the south pacific--about which, the less said the better, ye understand. It's certainly warm enough that I'll remove me coat now--the whiskeys doin' more to warm me bones than th' fire!

*(he stands and removes his captains-coat, and hangs it on the back of his chair, before resuming his seat).*

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH:

*(to BRENDA, bristling a little)*

I hardly think my marital status has any bearing on the circumstances. Some free advice in turn? Don't go telling another woman how she ought to live her life.

*(beat, realizing how biting that might have sounded)*

Sorry. I'm... just getting a little concerned. I was under the impression that tonight was some sort of specific event or purpose. Something feels... wrong.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(To FELICITY)*

It's okay, honey. No apologies necessary. I completely understand your pain. Don't worry. Grandma B is looking out for you. In fact, I think there are at least 3 eligible bachelors here (*takes a sweeping glance at CLAUDE, VAN, and STEN*) (*Turns to RUHANA*) And I'm looking out for you, too. (*Places a consoling hand on RUHANA'S arm.*) In the meantime, we wouldn't want to let these cheese tartlets go to waste. It's quite warm in here now. Cheese is melting.

RUHANA BEGUM

(Enjoys her tartlets with fork and spoon)

CPT ELSON

If somethings amiss I've had too much Scotch to be aware. One thing I do wonder is if our fair host--not Thebes but Thebes' employer, fer lack of better words--will make an appearance. Perhaps our fair host is already here, hidden among us, disguised as a guest, to test the merits of we oblivious merry-makers?

(*sips deeply from his scotch*)

CHERRY KILLS

Maybe it's you, Captain.

(winks)

CPT ELSON

That'd be news to me, Miss Cherry, only thing I'm master of is me ship and even she doesn't like to listen to me! Plus these hills be too far from the sea for me likin'. What if it's you, eh? I suppose I might regret my discourtesy to you earlier, though only briefly.

CHERRY KILLS

No offense taken. I was rude. I'm not great with strangers, or anyone really. If I were the host, I'd be in my room reading.

(raises glass)

CPT ELSON

(*reciprocates raised glass*)

Water under the bridge, Miss Cherry. Bless ye! It's certainly rare to socialize with anyone more than the moon an' stars in me line o' work.

*(beat, to sip scotch)*

Why **us**, you think? Miss Felicity, beggin' yer pardon, you seem most aware of the oddities of this party. Do you have any suspicions as to the thread that connects us, exceptin' that we all received invitations, a-course.

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(to Cpt. Elson)*

I'm not sure. It appears to me that I was a last-minute invite, anyway. Perhaps I wasn't initially meant to attend. What would a host want with a fishing captain, a doctor, some socialites, and a wi- a cook? Perhaps we should ask... Thebes, is it?

*(she eyes the melting cheese.)*

CPT ELSON

Aye, Thebes.

*(Calling to Thebes)*

Mister Thebes, sir! Pardon me imposin', I know you're mighty busy keepin' us all drunk and fed--but, we've gotten to talkin' and wonder what you can tell us about our fair host? With all grace and graciousness, I can't fer th' life of me figure why I've been honored with this invitation, much less who could know all of us in equal measure.

CHERRY KILLS

*(To CPT ELSON)*

Pigeons are notoriously hard to catch. Maybe he's got it cornered in the kitchen.

*(takes a sip of the Phoenix Fizz)*

*(To FELICITY and CPT ELSON)*

Well, maybe we should go over what we know? One thing is for certain, the host has to be loaded--just the booze alone must have cost a fortune.

DR MOREAU-WEBB

Captain, you were perturbed by Thebes' name. What does it mean to you? I have an inkling, but I'd like to hear it confirmed from your own mouth.

*(Finishes his cobra heart in a second tiny nite, and takes some eel mousse)*

CPT ELSON

*(to DR MOREAU-WEBB, whispering conspiratorily)*

Well, I may be a lowly sea-captain but I've heard a thing or two in my time and travels. Thebes was a city in Greece. They defied the rising Alexander the Great, and rose against him. For their impudence, the city was destroyed, wiped clean off the map. The name bears a bad omen, and I am afeared that it portends some ill for us. What it is, I cannot say.

*(speaking normally now)*

And who knows--maybe a drunk ol' sea captain doesn't know diddly squat, and poor Thebes is being unfairly maligned by his own guest.

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Whispering back to the CAPTAIN)*

You know plenty, Captain. And our thoughts are both running to the Greece of antiquity.

THEBES

*(to the Captain and company)*

Ah yes, they knew you would ask. I've been instructed to let you know that they would prefer to introduce themselves in due time. But for now—

*(to everyone)*

If I can have your attention again, your host has another surprise. They would like you to partake in Pithoigia - an ancient wine tasting ritual or *jar-opening* as it were. We are privileged to present an extraordinary journey through the vinous wonders of the globe. Seven unparalleled selections, each epitomizing the pinnacle of winemaking artistry, await your discernment. May your palate revel in their unparalleled distinction.

*(Pause, as staff uncorks wine table side)*

First we have the Santorini Assyrtiko, a Gaia Wines Wild Ferment Assyrtiko, from Santorini, Greece. Gaia's Wild Ferment version of Assyrtiko uses wild yeasts and is considered a top expression of the grape, showcasing complexity, minerality, and the volcanic terroir's unique characteristics with elegance and depth.

Please enjoy.

CPT ELSON

Thank you sir for clarifyin' fer us that our host does indeed intend to introduce themselves. We eagerly await! A jar opening suits me just fine, though I've never had a taste fer wine. I've never felt worse than I did after a few bottles on that south pacific island--er, anyhow, not sure how to describe the tasting notes of a volcanic terror but I'd be happy to do my best, in our fair hosts honor.

*BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:*

*(Reaches for charred octopus tentacle and smoked eel, placing one each on her china plate and her bamboo plate)* What kind of flavor is volcano ash? If it's as tasty as these burnt pieces of meat, then that's a downright delicious wine!

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

*(gorging himself with food)*

*(to THEBES)*

Is there a... uh... drinking option that isn't alcoholic? Those "wonders" sound lovely and all but I best not lose myself tonight.

*(places his fingers on his temples, looking a little silly)*

Gotta keep this mind sharp.

*(realises that the seat next to him is still free and moves into it)*

*(to CHERRY, speaking eagerly, as if he's been planning the line in his head for some time)*

Hey, Cherry, was it? I overheard you talking about your name and I was wondering if you might want to know where I got my nickname from. Y'know, the "Shooter" in "Sten "Shooter" Salington" is not for nothing.

THEBES

*(to SALINGTON)*

Certainly Mister Salington,

We have the Birch Whisper Spritz, Fresh birch sap, lemon zest, a hint of maple, topped with sparkling water.

Also the Forest Resin Cooler-Pine resin essence, honey, crisp cucumber, fresh mint, finished with soda fizz.



The Maple Breeze Mojito- Maple water, lime, mint, with a lively sparkle.

The Arabian Nights Sparkle- Gum arabic syrup, tart grapefruit, delicate rosewater, sparkling water.

Frankincense Mystique Fizz - Frankincense resin, honey, ginger, tonic water.

Also the Cedar Twilight Sparkler, Cedar tip tea, sweetened and brightened with lemon, effervescent finish.

And finally the Saffron Sigh & Mastic Dream, Saffron threads, mastic aroma, lemon, honey.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(to THEBES)

Um... I'll take whatever that last one you said was. The saffron, that sounds lovely.

THEBES

Certainly, sir

(Signals staff)

Though we do strongly encourage you to participate in our wine tasting. You can use the spittoon if you'd like.

(Staff places spit bucket on a small dais beside SALINGTON)

LILITH HART

(*Sipping her wine*)

I've always been attracted to the destructive power of a volcano. You said this was from the South Pacific, Thebes? It tastes more Mediterranean to me. Reminds me of a ghost I met in Pompeii.

CHERRY KILLS

(To LILITH HART)

Pompeii, imagine being immortalized so...flawlessly, it's romantic, really. I've always imagined their souls still trapped within the ash, not roaming about.

(takes a cigarette out of her case and holds it beneath her nose)

(To STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON)

Sure, I'll bite. Where'd you get your name, Shooter?

THEBES

(To LILITH)

Penfolds Grange from Australia, Ma'am, 2019

CPT ELSON

2019? A timeless vintage indeed!

*(takes a glass of the recently unjarred wine and swirls it, before taking a light sip)*

I can tell ye, with all the wisdom of a seasoned sommelier, that my palate detects that this is a...

*(beat)*

...red wine. How'd I do?

*(wheezing laughter)*

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(to CHERRY KILLS)

BAM!

*(pulls open the side of his jacket, revealing a miniature arsenal of weaponry, including a revolver, a sawn-off shotgun and a flintlock)*

*(to CHERRY KILLS, speaking proudly, but also as if it's a secret)*

Vintage weaponry finer than any other, as is the Salington way. All of it has been meticulously designed by my father, and made with the passion of the world's finest gunsmiths. You'll notice the engravings...

*(points out some rough marks that could just as easily be factory-made as lovely inscribed)*

(to CHERRY KILLS)

The "Shooter" thing is more for the tabloids, as I'm still yet to fire one of these bloody things, but I don't mind it. Good for business, I 'spose.

*(laughs a little, before pointing at the revolver)*

You can hold it, if you'd like. Father told me this particular one was popular amongst athletes, although I couldn't imagine what else you'd need it for. Might even be doing me a favor if you examined one, as this darn jacket has been weighing me down all evening.

*(looking at the spittoon with a bit of grimace)*

(to THEBES)

I 'spose I will take part then, if you really insist.

THEBES

(to CPT ELSON)

I'm afraid your guess is miscolored my Captain. The Assyrtiko is a white grape varietal.

(with a wink)

Perhaps your eye needs a polish?

CHERRY KILLS

(To STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON)

I'd love to hold it. Is it loaded?

(tucks the cigarette behind her ear)

THEBES

We'll open the next two bottles now, another white and a red

(nods to CPT ELSON)

First, a Rare German Riesling, the Egon Müller Scharzhofberger Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese, Mosel, Germany - This wine represents the pinnacle of German Riesling, from one of the most prestigious producers. Trockenbeerenauslese denotes a wine made from individually selected, botrytis-affected grapes, resulting in a wine of extraordinary concentration, sweetness, and acidity. And second, the Txakolina - a Ameztoi Stimatum, Getaria, Basque Country, Spain - This red Txakoli from Ameztoi, called Stimatum, is a rare find and showcases the versatility of the region. It's light, slightly effervescent, and displays a unique, refreshing profile with tart red fruit and a hint of earthiness.

CPT ELSON

(to Thebes)

Aye, you may be right! This is why I stick to scotch--no man who can't discern between Red or White appreciates the wine he's offered, 'specially when it's from ancient jars!

(to STEN SALINGTON, seeing the commotion)

Bless ye, sir, I've not seen that many dangerous arms since the Giant Squid incident off the Orkney Islands. Is it yer common practice to bring guns to dinner? I pray ye won't be giving us any demonstrations of their lethal power!

*(to those seated nearer)*

A blessin' too he's chosen not to drink our hosts fine alcohol, methinks!

CPT ELSON

*(holding out a cup)*

Let me have some of that unpronounceable red stuff, if me eyes don't deceive me again!

*(staff pour CPT ELSON the Txakoli)*

THEBES

*(to everyone)*

Please enjoy these additional small plates with your wines and various libations. May I present

Fermented Black Bean and Escargot Dumplings

Beetroot and Blood Orange Ceviche

Fried Green Tomato Caprese

Duck Liver Pâté with Bier Orange Marmalade

Crispy Tarantula with tamarind sauce

Honeyed Locusts on a crisp endive leaf with g jam

*([Ravel's Daphnis et Chloé Suite No 2](#) starts to play, again it's origin seems to be the room itself)*

LILITH HART

*(Helping herself to the crispy tarantula and honeyed locusts)*

Tarantula and locusts. This is certainly my kind of dinner party. Thebes, do you have a gramophone or some sort of sound system within the walls? I can't seem to figure out where this music is coming from.

CHERRY KILLS

*(To THEBES and LILITH HART)*

I was wondering the same thing. I love the music, but can't for the life of me figure out where it's coming from.

*(examining the food on the table)*

I had a pet tarantula when I was a child. Kevin. When he molted he came out a beautiful pink color. Think I'll go with the caprese.

THEBES

Indeed astute observations. At the Anthesterian Arms, our dining room, and other specialty spaces are designed as Resonant Chambers that emit tonal vibrations for your aural pleasure. Your host will be happy to hear you enjoy the sonic experience. It really does feel rather magical doesn't it?

LILITH HART

Resonant Chambers? Do these chambers have any other auditory properties? Is our host, by any chance, eavesdropping?

CPT ELSON

*(sipping the txakqwerty wine)*

Ain't eavesdroppin' on nothin' worth hearin' if he's been listenin' to my chatter, eh!

*(to THEBES)*

This stuff does taste redder than the last stuff, bless ye. I like it, despite meself! How old is this jar?

THEBES

*(tilts head toward LILITH, speaking softly)*

I can assure you, your host is uninterested in eavesdropping. They already know everything they need to know. Perhaps it's you who needs to find something out?

*(scans table)*

*(to CPT ELSON)*

Very good Captain, This jar is but a few years old, however it was a fine year in the Basque region, very hot summer and late harvest. We've got four more jars to open shortly! Some, quite red.

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

*(To FELICITY)* On second thought, that STEN character does not seem as eligible as I first thought. Wasted a fortune on guns. Scratch him from the list. In the meantime we may as well enjoy ourselves! *(Breaks off a crispy tarantula leg and tastes it.)*

DR MOREAU-WEBB

Thebes, you keep a truly excellent cellar. Which is unsurprising given the name of your establishment. As a medical man I am of

course familiar with Greek and Latin, and in my fight against the pestilence I have taken the opportunity to examine many ancient writings. Some of which were relevant to our current festivities. And of course, there was my time spent in the woods. Anyway, I'll take a glass of all you care to open. Even a German Riesling, though it smacks of disloyalty. But a man can be a little disloyal for a trockenbeerenauslese.

*(Helps himself to the blood orange ceviche)*

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(she nods idly at BRENDA's comment, moving her silverware around in a way that makes it appear as though she has sampled the offerings when she in fact, has not.)*

LILITH HART

*(Has been sitting in pensive silence since Thebes' comment, then suddenly leans forward)*

There has been quite a lot of talk about pigeons, at least compared to my typical conversations, yet I don't believe any of these dishes contain pigeon. I rather nodded off at the prolonged discussions of the avian equivalent of vermin, but now I wonder if they might be more important to this evening than I initially thought. Tell me, have I missed any significant...pigeon-related happenings?

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

*(To FELICITY)*

I hear someone asking about pigeons, dear. That is something you seem to know alot about. And about anything strange in the world, for that matter! *(Places fried green tomato on FELICITY'S plate, one on RUHANA'S plate, one on her china plate, and one on her bamboo plate)*

LILITH HART

*(To Brenda)*

Those fried green tomatoes must be quite extraordinary for you to share them so...forcefully. Or are you concerned that some of the guests may not be eating nutritiously enough?

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(looking forlornly down at the fried green tomato placed on her*

plate) We heard a pigeon - and I assure you they are *not* vermin. I look after quite a few. For letter-carrying, mostly. I had a quick look around, but I couldn't find it.

*(she moves to get up from her seat once again, seeming to avoid eating the fried green tomato at all costs)*

But if it's bothering you, I suppose I can have another look...

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(To LILITH)*

Oh! How kind of you to notice! I merely share the abundance I have!

*(Calls to FELICITY)* You did your best looking for the pigeon, dear. If it was carrying you a message, it was probably to tell you to enjoy yourself and try everything on the menu! It's not every day we get an opportunity like this! Fine dining, fine wine, a warm fire place!

*(To LILITH)* But you're right that I do pride myself in being concerned for others. *(Notices LILITH'S ring)*. An awfully dark shade for a wedding ring, don't you think?

LILITH HART

*(In a deadpan voice)*

You could say that. You could say it was this ring that bound my soul to my witch-king necromancer husband, Ungil.

*(Pause)*

You could also say that I'm unmarried and that I prefer my gemstones as black as my coffee. And my heart.

CHERRY KILLS

*(looks across the table at LILITH HART, then down the table at BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK)*

Wait-what's up with the tomatoes? I've already eaten half of this.

LILITH HART

I was just commenting that Mrs. - Schtilschpank, was it? - seemed very concerned with filling her dinner partners' plates.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(To LILITH)* Please, call me Grandma B. Honey, even when our relationships are complicated, we still need to work it out if

we can. Think on the positive side, most families can't have everyone with them on holidays. But you can invite all your dead relatives to holidays with a husband like that.

(To CHERRY)

The tomatoes are delicious, but you need to try one of these, too, hon. (*Removes bobby pin from oversized hair bun, pierces the center of a crispy tarantula, and passes it up the table to CHERRY*)

(To LILITH)

And think of the good you can do for the less fortunate in the world (*gestures to CHERRY*). Think of the peace you could bring people by bringing back the dead fathers they killed.

THEBES

(Chuckles knowingly turning away so no one sees him)

(*Debussy's Prélude à l'après-midi d'un Faune* begins)

CPT ELSON

(to BRENDA)

What could be more wholesome than a necromancer just tryin' t' raise a family!

(*wheezing laughter, slapping his right knee*)

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(struggling to find a place to speak amongst so many confident voices)

(to CPT ELSON)

Well, I wouldn't be much of an arms dealer without my arms, would I? And I'm afraid no demonstrations tonight... or I certainly bloody hope not!

(laughs a little too hard at himself)

(to CPT ELSON)

No, I thought when I replaced my father tonight that this evening might be for business and that I should bring his wares... but that is seeming less and less likely the longer I sit and listen. Still, if you're interested, you're more than welcome to have a look at what I've got.

(to CHERRY KILLS)



Uh... yes, I suppose it is loaded... in a way. Best not to muck around with it too much. Have you held one before? Dare I ask, have you used one?

(tentatively pulls out the revolver to offer, holding it by the barrel)

CHERRY KILLS

(looks down at the pierced tarantula with disgust, then to SHOOTER)

I've never held a revolver before. Thank you. I'll be careful.

(takes the revolver by the handle, and keeping her finger off the trigger and to the side of the weapon, lowers the barrel toward the table.)

It's pretty.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(to CHERRY KILLS)

Oh yes, very pretty indeed. I find there's almost something, what's the word... *masochistic*... in how beautiful something so dangerous can be.

(smiles, strangely satisfied, believing he's finally impressed one of the other guests. He's desperate for more of the feeling)

(to CHERRY KILLS)

Perhaps you'd like to hold onto it? Perhaps... Perhaps you'd even like to keep it. My gift to you. On the house. It's clear I'm not going to be conducting much business tonight, so I have no further use for it. Only if you want it, of course. I don't want to impose.

(continues smiling, as warmly as an arms dealer can, seeking some sort of approval)

LILITH HART

(To Sten)

What a lovely gift.

(To everyone)

I had hoped that my marriage to a witch-king necromancer would be correctly interpreted as sarcasm, but I can think of far worse rumors.

(Shrugs and goes back to her wine)

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

(To STEN)

Shame on you for peddling your overpriced goods to the most troubled person in the room. Your father would be ashamed of you, not that I know him---but if I were him, I would be.  
(Places a crispy tarantula on her china plate, and one on her bamboo plate).

(To LILITH)

Don't worry, honey. We all understand. It's okay to be honest. You are accepted as you are at this dinner party, isn't that right, THEBES?

CHERRY KILLS

(to STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON)

Nothing is ever free, Shooter. But, Ok, I'll keep it.

(Places the revolver in her lap)

(To BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK)

Look around, honey, we're all a little troubled.

THEBES

Quite right Mrs.SCHTILSHPANK, and speaking of getting personal,  
(to everyone)

An inspired proposition beckons from the heart of your host since you all, obviously, love a bit of theatre. Should the muse whisper in your ear, step forth and let your poetic spirit soar, Embrace the power of creativity and conversation this night and share your songs and poetic works in an impromptu recital

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(taken aback at the mention of his father. His face is red, as if it has figured out he's doing something wrong before his brain has. He's managed to spill a half dozen incoherent mumbles before anything tangible comes out)

(to BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK, sneaking the words out before anyone can react to THEBES' announcement. Defensive)

My father would never be ashamed of me. Never. He'd be proud of a sale, troubled or not. You... You didn't even know him. As for "Overpriced," how can that be when it's for free?

(swallows his flustered pride, too anxious to make any more of a scene)

(to CHERRY KILLS)

I'm glad you appreciate it, Miss. And for the record, I do not believe you to be troubled. Rather... un-troubled, actually.

LILITH HART

*(Drily)*

Was that you starting us off, Mr. SALINGTON?

*(Does an understated golf clap)*

Stirring performance.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

*(somehow grows even more red. He's not even witty enough to send sarcasm back. Sips his drink to avoid talking, keeps his eyes low)*

CPT ELSON

*(clearing his throat, and rising to his feet)*

Ahem, I'll take ye up on yer proposition, Thebes! Who c'n spend a life at sea and not have poetry make a home in his heart! That or...scurvy, seem the two options, hey? Anyhow, I'll try me hand at a verse or two, in our hosts honor.

*(sips scotch)*

A mystery most macabre  
with dinner, drinks divine

we gather here, and without fear  
do indulge ourselves some wine

and bless our host, be friend or ghost  
the evenings going fine

but 'ere too long, with talk and song  
we ask if they'll, too, dine

if they refuse, which they can choose  
we'll take it as a sign

that naughts amiss, and in drunken bliss  
we'll thank ye fer yer time

*(CPT ELSON bows deeply upon concluding, and raises his glass yet again)*

I swear I am putting a dent in yer scotch supply, so my compliments again to our gracious host, whether they stay away or not. I hope they'll come--feels discourteous to eat and drink so freely and not thank the host fer their kind indulgence! Anyhow, Cheers to the host and all that.

*(Sits heavily again)*

CHERRY KILLS

Very nice, Captain. You've inspired me.

*(sits up straight in her chair)*

Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these, 'I'm out of gin.'

*(her grin fades as the music becomes pensive)*

That's taking the fun out of it, isn't it? My aunt and uncle say that I'm too cynical. Let me see here, ok, here goes nothing.

*(puts her revolver on the table and stands)*

Iridescent rat

Where is your kin?

Symbol of peace

Smelling of olives

and promises

White

like an angel

A symbol of love

Iridescent rat

What makes you

foul?

Cornered, despised

A symbol of disease

*(sits down and places the revolver back onto her lap. She takes a big swig of wine and then, pouring another glass, nods to LILITH HART.)*

What about you? You seem a bit witchy.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(Wipes a tear as she watches CHERRY recite her poem)* There's hope for her yet.

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Appears horrified at the mention of a diseased rat. Takes a sip of trockenbeerenauslese, hesitates, then downs the glass and begins to recite)*

Hiding in the darkened hollows of the corpus

Pestilence is waiting, festering, impure.

Those of Science beware, for it will surely stalk us

To stop our mighty struggle: seeking for the cure.

We must win the race, find the hidden knowledge

Search out every fount of wisdom that was lost.

Hunting all the lost ways, at the margins we must forage.

Somewhere lies the answer, the thing it fears the most.

Do not scorn the wise folk, those once persecuted.

Seek out witch and shaman, read of alchemy.

For ancient seeds of learning when in modern minds are rooted

Will fruit with golden wisdom and destroy our enemy.

*(He tries to catch FELICITY'S eye)*

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

*(to DR MOREAU-WEBB)*

Bravo, bravo.

*(gulps)*

*(to ALL)*

I'm not very good at rhyming and all that. I suppose I don't have to do one. We could pretend that before was...

*(trails off, realising no one is entertaining his excuse. Takes a deep breath, doesn't stand)*

Ok, here goes.

Some days... are *bad*.  
Some days are *rad*.  
For some people I am *glad*.  
And others less so.

(he throws some conspicuous glares)

Sitting here, I wonder if I'm the... *fad*.  
Or maybe a little mad.  
Maybe... Maybe just a tad...  
Nobody knows the memories I forbad.

(eyes go glassy. They haven't moved since he started talking)

So please, please, let me just be any old lad.  
Please, please, don't let me be... my...

(draws out the word, then gulps again. Laughs a little)  
I can't think of another bloody rhyme. Sorry, someone else can  
go. I should've rhymed with gun. Yeah, yeah... I reckon that  
would've been a lot more fun.  
(shrinks further back into his chair)

RUHANA BEGUM

(pours her drink in BRENDA's glass)  
(clears her throat to get attention)  
The night holds sinister secrets  
In bloody hands  
Whose we would not know  
Till it ends  
So make merry and enjoy  
For it may be your last  
Such is the game of destiny  
It never favors people  
Who are stuck in their past.  
(takes a sip of her water)

LILITH HART

A woman once dined with some strangers.  
She wondered if she was in danger.  
But, with shrug and with grin,

She imbibed some gin,  
Prepared for the evening to change her.  
*(Shrugs, leaning back in her chair)*  
It nearly rhymes, anyway.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(Stands, glass of Trockenbeerenauslese in hand.)*

I wait to see them.  
All of them.  
Each one.  
Outside their schools  
And jobs  
from behind my car windshield.  
I send cards in the mail.  
I check my messages.  
Keep checking.  
I wait.  
Am I invisible?  
Maybe I shouldn't have shown up  
around lunch time  
every day  
last winter.  
I ate the last piece of cornbread.  
But I just wanted to be  
Part of the family.  
Not purposeless.  
Not wandering.  
Not forgotten.  
Why don't my grandchildren  
call me anymore?  
Ghosted.

I am dedicating this poem to all of you here, even you, STEN. I am so proud of all your poems. Being here has made me feel like a Grandma again. Maybe the fungus that made these wine grapes sweet can make me sweet enough for all of you to love, too. And CHERRY, I want you to know that I think you did such a good job on that eye makeup, honey. *(Smiles awkwardly at CHERRY).*

*(Sits down and takes a large gulp of Trockenbeerenauslese).*

CHERRY KILLS

(looks across CPT ELSON to BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK)

Thank you, Brenda. I just loved Vivien Leigh's makeup in Cleopatra. I've been wearing my eyes like this since I was a girl. Started just after my mother-

(sneezes)

Oh my, these allergies are no fun.

(drains the last of her wine)

Brenda, would you mind pouring me a glass of whatever it is you have over there?

(To Thebes)

Thebes, can you get this tarantula out of my face? It's making me feel a little queasy looking at it.

(dabs at forehead with her napkin)

THEBES

(signs with spidery finger

signs to staff who take away CHERRY'S appetizer, then to EVERYONE)

So happy to see everyone enjoying their wines, especially the Trockenbeerenauslese, and thank you for indulging your host with these poignant passages. We have two more wines to open now, first the Tsoolikouri from Imereti—a Baia's Wine Tsoolikouri. Baia's Wine is a small, family-run winery that has gained attention for its organic practices and exceptional expressions of local Georgian grape varieties, including Tsoolikouri, offering a vibrant, aromatic, and textured wine, and secondly, the Pineau des Charentes, a Paul-Marie & Fils Pineau des Charentes, Aged 20 Years, this Pineau des Charentes is intensely rich and complex, with a profound depth of flavor, balancing sweetness with acidity and showcasing the art of aging Pineau.

*BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:*

(To THEBES)

I will take that crispy tarantula off your hands if CHERRY won't eat it.

THEBES



(signals staff to open wine and spider signs the tarantula to be delivered to *BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK*)

Please enjoy!

The main courses will be out soon when all our guests have had a chance to sample the first dishes.

LILITH HART

*(Looking as though she feels a bit guilty and uncomfortable after BRENDA'S poem)*

Lovely poem, Mrs. Schtilschpank. Thank you for sharing.

*(Immediately goes back to her signature dead-eyed stare)*

DR MOREAU-WEBB

The wine is a muse to us all. Such wonderful sentiments expressed. And SHOOTER, you should not sell yourself short. Your poem may have been simple, but it was still elegantly moving. I could recommend a certain Dr Freud, based in Vienna, if you would explore your paternal relationship in a sympathetic and private space.

*(He takes the last tarantula and pours himself a glass of each wine he has not yet tasted, sipping them all one by one, cleansing his palate with a crispy leg between mouthfuls).*

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

[slurring]

Dear DR MOREAU-WEBB, would you please pour me some of that wine? I've been wookin' all ower for... [snapping her fingers] THWEBEZ! I can't fwinn' 'im. [knocking over her now empty glass and setting it up right]

DR MOREAU-WEBB

It would be my pleasure, Mrs PRES... Mrs PREST, PRESSSDT?  
*(He pours her a glass of the Pineau and hands it to her)*

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

It's Dee Pressdt, by the way. Thanx Doc!

[she takes a guzzle and stumbles off again.]

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(sauntering into the room with a pigeon clutched between her hands - it does not seem to mind this at all, and in fact looks quite placid)*

I FOUND IT! Poor thing was stuck in the parlor. One of the staff was trying to swat at it with a broom!

*(she returns to her seat, letting the pigeon step up onto the threadbare cloth of her slender shoulder. Circled around her tablesetting are the many glasses of wine tastings she missed while out searching for her famili- pigeon friend.)*

Oh. Have I missed much?

GASCOIGNE

*(He walks in through the main entrance looking like death. Without pause he moves into the dining hall and passes all the guests without so much as giving them a single look. Stopping at the roaring fireplace, he pulls his weathered hands out of his trench coat pockets and holds them out to warm them. He says nothing.)*

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Stands and shouts in an agitated manner)*

Everyone stand back, the man who just enters shows every sign of suffering from the initial stages of the pestilence.

*(To GASCOIGNE, shouting louder)*

SIR, DO YOU HAVE A FEVER?

GASCOIGNE

*(Still facing the fire, he tilts his head out of annoyance.*

*He speaks without facing DR MOREAU-WEBB)*

Why don't you come and find out, Dr? So far, you're the only pestilence Gascoigne can see.

CPT ELSON

*(wheezing laughter)*

That so, sir? And the doctor and I haven't even spat in each others soup yet. Welcome to th' party, take a seat at yer leisure, enjoy some spider toes or eel spleen or whate'er's on the menu.

GASCOIGNE

(grunts in acknowledgment of CPT ELSON, still remains facing the fire.)

(To DR MOREAU-WEBB)

You could take a note from the old timer on hospitality.

DEPRESSED HOUSEWIFE

[stumbles by]

Word!

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To FELICITY)

I'm so glad you found your pigeon intact, dear. You returned just in time to take a look at our latest eligible bachelor who just walked in the room. (*Gestures over her shoulder with her thumb, pointing at the man by the fire*)

DR MOREAU-WEBB

(To GASCOIGNE)

And you could accept medical attention when offered freely. You are quite sure you are well?

(*He sits down, takes a sip of Tsolikouri and turns to FELICITY*)

I am glad you have found your pigeon, Mademoiselle.

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH:

(to Dr. Moreau-Webb and Brenda)

As am I - though this one doesn't belong to me. But like cats, I'm not sure pigeons ever really belong to anyone.

(*she looks up at the man who has entered but said nothing, standing instead in front of the fire.*)

It is terribly chilly out there. Sir, are you alright? I suppose we could ask the staff to toss another log on, if you like?

ALDEROSE AIKEN:

*(ROSIE swallows her wine at an awkwardly loud volume while observing the tense exchange.  
She chokes and sputters.  
ROSIE lowers her rapidly reddening face and attempts to suppress her coughing with her napkin.)*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To DR CLAUDE)

Do something, son!

ALDEROSE AIKEN:

*(tries to wave them away with a red face, still coughing.  
Her eyes are streaming.)*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(Reaches back to grab GASCOIGNE's arm) Are you blind? You've been staring into that fire while people are dying.

CHERRY KILLS

(takes the cigarette from behind her ear and holds it beneath her nose)

(to room)

She's Ok, just give her a moment.

(to ALDEROSE AIKEN)

Blink twice if you need help, honey. Was that a blink or were you just squinting from the cough?

(To the room)

I think she was only-there you see! That was three blinks. She's told us she's fine.

GASCOIGNE

(To BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK)

Dying? She ain't dying.

(He glares over at DR MOREAU-WEBB)

Gascoigne's been waiting on the good doctor to jump into action, that is unless he's scared of catchin' something from her coughing.

(He wanders over to ALDEROSE AIKEN, places one hand on her chair, the other on the table and leans in uncomfortably close)

Does Gascoigne make ya nervous, girl?

CHERRY KILLS

(to GASCOIGNE)

-help her or get out of her face. The only thing scary about you is that you talk about yourself in the third person.

(puts the cigarette back behind her ear)

GASCOIGNE

(Smirks at CHERRY KILLS, unmoving)

Or what, Ms. Kills? You gonna make good on your last name?

CHERRY KILLS

(doesn't break eye contact with GASCOIGNE)

Maybe.

(to Thebes)

Bring our friend here a whiskey.

(to GASCOIGNE)

I'm thinking that might be your poison?

GASCOIGNE

(He paused a moment, glaring at CHERRY KILLS, before erupting in hoarse laughter. He smacks the table and looks back at her)

Ah Ha! Gascoigne knew he liked somethin' about you. You've got a fire in ya, kid.

(His face grows serious)

But be careful. Never know when your talkin' to someone who could extinguish those flames.

(He reaches into his trench coat slowly and pulls out a small bottle of unlabeled whiskey)

You're good at readin' people though. Gascoigne will give ya that.

CHERRY KILLS

(to THEBES)

Better bring me another Phoenix Fizz.

(Smiles at GASCOIGNE)

GASCOIGNE

(Tips his bottle at CHERRY KILLS and moves on from ALDEROSE AIKEN. On his way back to the fire, he coughs in his hand and slaps DR MOREAUX WEBB on the shoulder)

Way to go, Doc.

(He pulls up a chair to the fire and sits down cradling his whiskey.)

CPT ELSON

*(casually sipping scotch)*

Mr. Gas-Can sir, beggin yer pardon, you've got us all in a tizzy. Are you sure Miss Rosie ain't dyin'? I'm sure there's some of us what hoped we could take a box home but none of us want to leave here in a bag, if you catch me meanin' sir.

GASCOIGNE

*(Staring at the fire once again)*

Considerin' she's choking on her wine, either she'll be fine or she won't. If she's not, then probably bes'ta look at the wine, if ya know what I mean, old timer. Ain't Gascoigne's problem.

CPT ELSON

*(reaches over to grab ROSIES wine glass and swirls and sniffs it)*

I don't know much about wine, I can't tell the difference between white and red, much less poisoned or unpoisoned.

*(dips a pinky finger in and tastes it)*

Beggin yer pardon Miss Rosie, try'na keep ye alive, mind!

*(to GASCOIGNE again)*

Sir, are you familiar with this place, or th' host hereof? We've been dinin' fer some time now and 'till you showed up none've us seemed te know what was goin' on. Ye come late, ye movin' chairs around like ye own th' place, were you invited by th' same host what invited us?

GASCOIGNE

*(He takes a long swig from the bottle before addressing CPT ELSON)*

Gascoigne was invited, same as all ya. Regardin' our host, the better question to ask would be, why would he invite someone like Gascoigne to such a fancy dinner party, eh? Are your gears

spinnin' yet, old timer? Gascoigne knows as much as any of ye, 'specially about our host.

CPT ELSON

*(pushes his chair back to look at GASCOIGNE)*

Now see here, Mister Gas-Can Sir, I don't take yer meanin' by "someone like you". We're all a little odd but we're all a little the same. Take you and me, we've got one pair of good eyes between the two of us--that's a bargain by any measure. I don't know what makes you different other than speakin' strange-like an' a predisposition fer interior design.

*(sips scotch)*

No, me gears have long since rusted so I'm just a drunk old fool, but seems to me if you're as ignorant as th' rest've us then either someone here's lyin' or the host is doin' a right proper job keepin' us all on our toes--or pegs, as the case may be.

GASCOIGNE

*(He meets CPT ELSONS eye)*

Them gears ain't as rusty as you think, old timer. Tell Gascoigne, you trust your gut a lot out at sea?

CPT ELSON

*(nods solemnly)*

Aye, only other thing I trust is me compass and even that fails me from time to time. Naught but intuition and th' feel o' the waves to keep yer ship on course and your mind afloat--or vice versa, hey?

GASCOIGNE

*(Points at CPT ELSON'S beer belly, bottle sloshing in hand)*

What's your gut tellin' ya about this dinner party, eh?

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(sighing, dismissive)*

Yes, yes, there's something terribly off about it. I felt it since I first walked in the door - haven't had a bite of the food on superstition alone. I'm afraid you're late to the party in more ways than one, Mr. Gascoigne.

*(the pigeon on her shoulder coos gently, as if backing her up)*

with a YEAH, SISTER, YOU SAID IT, THAT MAID TRIED TO HIT ME WITH A BROOM.)

CPT ELSON

*(wheezing laugh)*

Aye, Miss Felicity has the measure of it. Me gut tells me that I've had too much to drink and too little to eat. That the night waxes long and none've us know what mutual acquaintance we all share. That somethin' don't feel right that I couldn't point out to ye if I had two eyes starin' right at it.

GASCOIGNE

*(Makes no effort to face FELICITY BERRYCLOTH, but address her anyway)*

Ain't late, ain't early. Gascoigne shows up when Gascoigne plans to. Difference between you and Gascoigne is Gascoigne knows what he walked into, before Gascoigne walked into it.

CPT ELSON

*(wheezing laughter again)*

HA! Yer good eye must be better than mine, I don't see half the things I walk into and I don't know what it is the other half o' the time.

THEBES

*(returning to Dining room from behind one of the curtains lining the room)*

Ah ha yes, good, I see Monsieur Gascoigne has arrived. Please don't be alarmed. I understand everyone might feel somewhat unsettled by the unusual circumstances regarding your invitations, but I can assure you that your host will illuminate the situation in a short time. Meanwhile we have our main courses coming out and our last two bottles of wine from our Pithoigia ritual tasting.

*(a couple of candles seemingly extinguish and then relight themselves on the table)*

THEBES

Here we have an Orange Wine from Friuli-Venezia Giulia—Radikon Oslavje, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy - Stefano Radikon is a key



figure in the natural wine movement, and his Oslavje, a blend of Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio, and Sauvignon Blanc, is macerated with the skins for an extended period, creating a benchmark orange wine with unparalleled complexity and texture. And now for the last bottles in our tasting we have Vin Jaune, Jura- from Jean-François Ganevat Vin Jaune, Jura, France - Ganevat's Vin Jaune is highly sought after for its precision, depth, and expression of the Jura terroir. Known for meticulous winemaking and biodynamic practices, Ganevat's wines are exemplary in their class. Please enjoy. The mains are coming out now.

(staff clears used glasses and first courses, sets new ones glasses and uncorks wine for the table — one server hurry's by dropping another bottle whiskey near CPT ELSON)

GASCOIGNE

(He eyes the bottle of whiskey set down near CPT ELSON)  
Don't be greedy, old timer.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(is unsure if he's terrified or in awe of the force that is GASCOIGNE. Realising it must have been GASCOIGNE's seat that he moved into earlier, he shuffles back to his own)

(to GASCOIGNE, surprisingly confidently)

Mr Gas-Coin, sir. I'm terribly sorry but I believe I was in your seat. It wasn't my intention to disrespect you so. Please, if you get tired of the fire's wrath, do come and take a seat next to me.

(nervously eyes BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK before his next sentence)

(to GASCOIGNE)

Perhaps, if you truly are sceptical of this evening, you'd be interested in browsing some of the... uh... *protection*... that I'm carrying.

CPT ELSON

*(laughs at GASCOIGNE's admonition and fills up his glass, before passing the bottle over to GASCOIGNE)*

Aye, here y'ar Mr. Gas-Can, To yer health, and to yer missing eye--may it grant ye a keen vision all the same!

*(CPT ELSON raises his glass before taking a drink)*

GASCOIGNE

(Initially ignores STEN SALINGTON to cheers with CPT ELSON)

(TO CPT ELSON)

Right back at you, old timer.

(Downs the entire glass in a single go before turning his attention to STEN SALINGTON)

(To STEN SALINGTON)

Boy, your nose is so far up Gascoigne's ass, could you do Gascoigne a favor and tell Gascoigne how it smells? Gascoigne don't care about no damn seat. Ain't no one like a brown noser. (He takes a swig from his original bottle of whiskey, before going back to the conversation)

As for your so-called "protection", Gascoigne wouldn't touch that shit with a ten foot pole. Gascoigne seen the imprints of all your "protection" as soon as Gascoigne walked in the door. You ain't protectin' nobody, not even yourself. Call Gascoigne Gas-coin again and you'll be able to put that protection to a test. Old timer's got a pass.

*(CPT ELSON almost spits his drink)*

GASCOIGNE

(Reaches for CPT ELSON'S glass and tops it off without skipping a beat)

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(is somehow deadly still and quivering at the same time)

But... But...

(STEN cannot get a thought out, let alone a sentence)

(to GASCOIGNE)

Mr Gas-, Gascoigne, sir, mister, I... I did not mean to offend.

(he's not sure if he hates GASCOIGNE, or if he now wants him on his side even more. But one thing is for certain, STEN's decided he's terrified)

(to ALL)

I think I might get some air. Yeah... Yeah, I think I'm going to go get some air.

(in his flustered state he picks a random exit. Is seen dabbing his face as he leaves)

GASCOIGNE

(Amused, he watches STEN SALINGTON leave)  
(He mutters to himself)  
Gotta love when a problem takes care of itself.

ALDEROSE AIKEN:

*(she dabs her eyes from the coughing it)*  
*(quietly)* excuse me, I've got to find the restroom.  
*(she rises.)*

[Beethoven's Creatures of Prometheus](#) plays through the room)

THEBES

*(motions towards a curtain)*  
This way Miss Aiken

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(To FELICITY)*  
He certainly doesn't pick on anyone his own size. *(glances disapprovingly at GASCOIGNE)* Poor STEN. Scratch him from the list, my dear. You're better off with the pigeon.

THEBES

*(with a flourish)*  
May I present the main courses,

*(servers deliver plates to the table)*

Braised Rabbit with Prunes  
Alligator Tail Roulade  
Moonfish Steak with Starfruit Relish  
Wild Boar Ribs with ghost pepper sauce  
Pan-Seared Kangaroo Loin with coffee crust  
Roast Beast with a blueberry and lavender glaze

And accompanying sides,

Black Lentil and Root Vegetable Medley  
Crispy Brussel Sprouts with lardons  
Purple Cauliflower Gratin  
Sautéed Bier Greens with garlic  
Fried Lotus Root Chips with saffron aioli

Charred Leek and Black Sesame Polenta with a drizzle of true honey

And for those interested in a (clears throat) rare treat, we have our Omophagy options, please do ask if you're curious.

LILITH HART

I am curious, but do I dare ask?

On a different note, did I hear you correctly when you said "kangaroo loin?"

THEBES

(to LILITH HART but loud enough for everyone)

Indeed Miss Hart, tastes like venison, it's pungent and delicious. As for your curiosity, I'll await your confirmation.

GASCOIGNE

(to BRENDA SHTILSHPANK)

Gascoigne begs to differ, he's at least twice Gascoigne's size.

(To THEBES)

Ain't one for fancy food, Gascoigne is good with whiskey.

THEBES

(to GASCOIGNE nodding)

Very well sir.

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

(To GASCOIGNE)

I mean in terms of intelligence and daring, son. And that is not meant as a compliment. You should apologize when he returns. I insist upon it. Your life will improve drastically when you gain that kind of courage.

GASCOIGNE

(To BRENDA SHTILSHPANK)

Well, Gascoigne wishes that you would pick on someone as old and feeble as yourself, but we don't always get what we want, do we? Ain't no reason to apologize, so don't hold your breath. If Sten's a man, he'll get over it.

(takes another hefty swig of whiskey)

THEBES

(signals server to distract BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK with Crispy Lotus Root Chips)

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To THEBES)

Oh, might I have a bit of aluminum foil? (Takes a bite of Lotus root chip)

THEBES

(nods approval to server who rushes off for some foil)

ALDEROSE AIKEN

(follows THEBES's gesture)

GASCOIGNE

(Gestures towards ALDEROSE AIKEN and starts speaking to CPT ELSON)

See, told ya she wasn't dyin'.

CPT ELSON

(raises glass)

I figured it out when her wine didn't kill me. Though--I once survived for four days on only the barnacles I could scrape off a dead, floating whale, while in the doldrums of the pacific. I told you I trust me gut! Anyhow, poor Miss Rosie gave us all a fright! Cheers to not dyin'! At least, not yet.

GASCOIGNE

(He pours himself some of the nice whiskey into a glass and raises it with CPT ELSON)

To barnacles, dead whales and good wine.

(He downs the entire cup once again, seemingly not even slightly more drunk than the last time)

CPT ELSON

(chuckling)

And, uh, to makin' up fer lost time, apparently. Pace yerself, laddie!

GASCOIGNE

(Smirks while looking at the empty glass)  
Old timer, you'll be fighten' to keep up with Gascoigne by the end of the night.

CPT ELSON

Nay, sir, I learned my lesson on that...south pacific island...  
(shudders)  
Anyhow, to each his own, I won't stop ye from drinkin' yerself under.

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

(to CPT ELSON, passing him plate of Lotus Root Chips, while reserving some on her bamboo plate)  
Put these on ROSIE'S plate. I'm glad she's okay. These chips are not choking hazards, so they'll be good for her.

ALDEROSE AIKEN:

(returns, mascara cleaned up from her coughing session.  
ROSIE sits.  
She looks at her plate and sees that someone has served her.)  
(In surprise) Oh!

CPT ELSON

Eh, beggin' yer pardon miss Rosie--since the wine failed to kill you Miss Brenda seems determined to smother you with these crisps.  
(raises a glass)  
To your good health and death deferred! Though--your wine has had me pinky in it to test fer poison. Maybe another drink...

ALDEROSE AIKEN:

(Smiles, to BRENDA) thank you.  
(To CAPT. ELSON, ROSIE raises her glass politely, but she places it back on the table, wary of another coughing fit.)

DR MOREAU-WEBB

(He has been thoroughly and perhaps a little fastidiously sterilising his jacket with whisky. Satisfied it is clean, he turns to GASCOIGNE)

To answer your earlier question, Monsieur, it is clear that our host wished to invite a table that would represent all facets of humanity. Including the dregs, the feebleminded, and those so lacking in themselves that they must grotesquely overcompensate in their manner for their masculine deficiencies. Both internal and external.

(To THEBES)

I will indulge in some omophagy. I take it on trust that the source will be well husbanded and free from parasite and blemish.

CPT ELSON

Enough bragging about yourself Doctor! What do you think of our friend Mister Gas-Can?

*(wheezes laughter)*

DR MOREAU-WEBB

I do not think I count him a friend, Captain. But I will not insult our host by rejecting his choice of guests.

*(He drinks of the final two wines, and finds himself filled with a feeling both profound and entirely strange to him)*

THEBES

*(to MOREAU-WEBB)*

*Very good Doctor, your host will be pleased, though I do hope you will find a kindred adventurous spirit to share the experience. And I can assure you, the chef holds a high bar when it comes to selection and butchery.*

GASCOIGNE

*(He glances at DR MOREAU-WEBB and smirks before turning his attention to THEBES)*

*(To THEBES)*

Look no further, Gascoigne will be the kindred soul to share the experience with the good doctor. Gascoigne will have whatever he's having.

*(He glances back at DR MORUEAX-WEBB and raises his glass once more)*

To the dregs and pompous airheads of society.

DR. MOREAU-WEBB

(to GASCOIGNE and present company)

Very good, we've found some common ground, though I hope we can entice a few more guests to join us. For our edification, in the rich tapestry of ancient rites and rituals, there exists a practice known as omophagy, a term that hails from a time when the lines between the divine and the mortal were deeply entwined with the natural world. This practice, deeply symbolic, was part of sacred ceremonies dedicated to Dionysus, the god of wine, fertility, and rebirth. It represented the profound connection between humanity and the cycles of nature, a communion in the truest sense, where participants sought unity with the divine essence through the earth's bounty.

LILITH HART

*(Rolls her eyes as DR. MOREAU-WEBB speaks and begins to focus on Thebes and the curtain which separates the servants' quarters from the dining area. She gets up and approaches Thebes.)*

I'm afraid I need to...powder my nose.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To MOREAU-WEB)

This wine from Italy will pair too well with the roast beast for me to try anything else, I think! Though I don't even know what sort of beast it is! Too many mysteries to keep track of. All that matters to me is that we all get ourselves a good meal out of this dining experience.

CHERRY KILLS

(to everyone)

Is it just me or is the music getting louder?

(raises her voice over the music to speak to DR. MOREAU-WEBB)

What exactly is omophagy?

DR MOREAU-WEBB

It is from ancient Greek. Omos, meaning raw. Phagia, meaning to eat. We taste of raw flesh.

(To GASCOIGNE)

I am not blind to the idea, Monsieur, that as opposites each of us will carry at least a spark of knowledge which will benefit the other.



STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(drags his feet into the room, although with surprising stealth. Sits in his initial seat. Seems to have forgotten his jacket somewhere. Outside? In the bathroom? Even he can't quite be sure)

(to THEBES)

I think I've changed my mind on the whole alcohol thing, THEBES. What can I get the most drunk off of?

(he's neither looking at GASCOIGNE or away from him, kind of just staring through. Grabs a drink from somewhere in front of him, unsure and uncaring if it already has an owner)

(to THEBES)

Actually, scratch that. This'll do just fine.

(after taking a big swig he holds the drink low, perhaps to hide his red knuckles)

LILITH HART

(Pauses on her way to the bathroom and turns back toward STEN SALINGTON)

I'm going to the powder room, not leaving for the night. You don't take a lady's beverage.

(To Thebes)

Could I please get another glass of the squid ink cocktail? It seems MR. SALINGTON is thirsty.

(To STEN SALINGTON)

Hope you enjoy squid ink.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(to LILITH HART)

If it eases your mind, *ma'am*, I would have done the same to anyone.

(takes another swig and makes a sour face, perhaps a little too sour, as it looks like he's overdoing it for a reaction)

God, this thing is *poison*...

(to THEBES)

But best get me another, THEBES, before I have to steal from someone else. Wouldn't want any more unfriendliness.

(to himself, quietly)

... or complaining.

THEBES

(nods to LILITH HART)

Certainly, Miss Hart, another Abyssal Bloom for you.

(to STEN)

Sir please help yourself to the many wonderful wines at the table. And please enjoy the feast before you.

(server places large wine glass in front of STEN)

(back to LILITH HART motioning toward the curtain for the powder room)

And if you'd be so kind, please have a look and see if MISS AIKEN is alright while you're in there.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(gulps down his entire drink before resurfacing for air)

(to THEBES)

Thank you. Y'know, you do grow used to this taste. Pity I can't say the same for the swaying.

(grabs another of the wines THEBES suggested before)

CPT ELSON

*(TO BRENDA, mouth full of Moonfish steak)*

Roast Beast? A fine choice, Miss

Brenda. That there looks to be a land-beast by me estimation. Sea beasts are foul to behold, and fouler to eat. Once, in the black sea I sighted a beast so large and foul that I had to give chase, and for three days and nights I pursued this creature--though it was headed for the Bosphorus, and dove deep as can be, and I lost it. It had black flesh and red eyes and a tail big enough it could have flipped me boat over Istanbul to the other side of the Bosphorus strait! The one that got away, eh! Ne'er seen it's like again, and not sure I'd want to!

THEBES

(overhearing CPT ELSON)

It's definitely not Catoblepas,

*(snickering at his own joke)*

I believe the beast tonight is more Calydonian Boar!

CHERRY KILLS

(to the room)

I don't eat flesh, raw or otherwise.

(gets up from the table and, holding her gun at her side, leaves toward the restroom)

LILITH HART

*(To Thebes, nodding toward Miss Aiken's seat)*

I believe Miss Aiken has returned safe and sound, though I think, perhaps, a little wary of the wine.

*(Exits behind curtain)*

THEBES

*(to CHERRY as she gets up)*

Apologies, we do have vegetarian options! Would a Purple Potato Gnocchi with Sea Fennel Pesto and Candied Buddha's Hand suit you or perhaps an Heirloom Bean Cassoulet with Black Truffle and Pickled Samphire?

ALDEROSE AIKEN

*(Hearing LILITH's comment, tilts her glass warily and observes the clear liquid streaks)*

*(quietly)* Larmes de vin.

CHERRY KILLS

*(stops in the doorway, scratches her head with the barrel of the gun)*

*(to THEBES)*

You're the best, sweetie. Let's go for the gnocchi. And one carrot. Raw.

*(to DR. MOREAU-WEBB)*

Don't want to be the party pooper.

RUHANA BEGUM

*(pushing her plate away and scrunch her nose)*

I would prefer the vegetarian option too.

*(smiles at CHERRY)*

*(to THEBES)*

Where are you getting this stuff from? Even I had trouble reaching here. You don't have a magical door in the kitchen, do you?

CHERRY KILLS

(winks at RUHANA BEGUM and then disappears behind the curtain)

THEBES

(to RUHANA smiling and swirling the scar on his cheek)  
Magic? No. But we do have a very resourceful procurement team.  
We will bring out the vegetarian options for you both right  
away.

RUHANA BEGUM

(gives THEBES a cautionary look)

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(finishes another glass. Appears largely uninterested in  
conversation for the time being. Looks up every so often to  
follow along, but his only words are hushed mumbles under his  
breath about guns and alcohol... and occasionally about his dad  
and his business. Grabs another drink)

GASCOIGNE

(He notices how STEN SALINGTON has distanced himself from the  
party)

(To STEN)

So, Sten, where'd that jacket go? Ya'know, the one with all that  
"protection" your peddling.

(the energy in the room escalates and [DahkaBrahka - Tataryn](#)  
begins)

GASCOIGNE

(Looks in the direction of where the music is playing,  
distracting him)

(To THEBES)

What in the hell is this awful music?

THEBES

I'm afraid I don't have a clue, though I believe the Resonant  
Chamber is designed to react to the energy of the room.

(to GASCOIGNE)

May I suggest thinking pleasant thoughts?

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(under her breath)*

Fae for sure. I was right not to eat.

GASCOIGNE

*(Glares at THEBES)*

Ah, so Gascoigne only needs to change the energy in the room to change the music. Easy enough.

*(He reaches into one of many trench coat pockets and pulls out an abnormally large handgun [S&W 500] that looks quite normal in his large hands. He smirks at THEBES)*

How 'bout this for changing the energy?

*(He points up at the ceiling and fires a shot)*

THE PIGEON ON FELICITY'S SHOULDER

*(flutters nervously, flapping its wings at the gunshot. But after hovering in the air for a moment, settles back down, as if unwilling to leave her)*

CPT ELSON

*(jolts in surprise)*

WHAT IN THE BLAZES ARE YE DOIN YE MAD MAN.

*(rises to his feet/peg)*

Curse ye, at the start o' the evenin' I knew havin' guns about would be barney rubble. And there ye go, Mr. Gas-Can, firin' the first bleedin' shot. Sit down ye rascal and give me that gun.

Too many drinks flowin' fer that kind of blasted foolhardiness.

*(for once, his glass eye and his normal eye are in alignment, staring daggers at GASCOIGNE, as CPT ELSON extends a hand demanding his weapon.)*

*(The curtain, which had begun to move, flutters back into place as LILITH HART rethinks returning to the dining room)*

GASCOIGNE

*(He meets CPT ELSON'S eye, gun still in hand)*

GASCOIGNE was changing the energy, as THEBES practically recommended. Sit down old timer, I like ya, but ya ain't gettin' my gun.

*(He sits back down in front of the fire and puts his gun back where it was)*

(To THEBES)

Ain't hear no change in music.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To GASCOIGNE)

A lesson in the futility of violence! All you managed to do was scare a pigeon!

CPT ELSON

*(remaining standing, hand out stretched, glass eye beginning to wander again)*

Ain't noone, with so little sense as to fire a gun in such a place as this, has the sense to keep it. Surrender ye gun. I like ye too--but ye got te have a sense o' respect and responsibility. Firin' a gun at dinner ain't neither o' those. I can't ask ye to leave as the host invited ye, but puttin' a hole in the hosts ceiling ain't respectful neither. Ye crossed a line, Mr. Gas-Can, sir. None can sit at ease knowin' there's a foolhardy drunkard who might produce a gun and fire it any which-a-way on the slightest flight o' whimsey.

GASCOIGNE

*(Ignores BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK and continues staring at the fire. He reaches into his trench coat once more, produces the gun and places the barrel under his chin)*

(To CPT ELSON)

Ain't gotta worry, old timer.

*(Pulls trigger, the gun clicks, signifying it's empty)*

Gascoigne used the rest of the bullets on the way in. Guess you'll just have to sit uneasy, since Gascoigne wouldn't need a gun to off any of ya.

*(Slams gun on the table)*

CPT ELSON

*(picks up the gun, stuffs it in the in-breast pocket of his coat.)*

I thank ye kind sir, for helpin' us have a pleasant evenin', gunshots aside. Ain't no one here is lookin' fer trouble, just try'na finish our moonfish in peace and listen to our hosts ephemeral music. When the host arrives I'll return ye gun and let ye explain yer remodeling ambitions.

*(returns to his seat)*

Now, who needs a top-up?

*(takes a drink of his scotch)*

LILITH HART

*(Striding into the room as though she hadn't just been hiding behind a curtain)*

*(To GASCOIGNE)*

What song were you hoping to hear after your outburst, sir? "The 1812 Overture?" Green Day's "21 Guns?" "Flight of the Valkyries?" I'd be very interested to learn your preferred playlist for the evening.

CHERRY KILLS

*(enters the room from behind the curtain. Sees the dust and debris falling from the ceiling.)*

We just can't have nice things, can we?

*(takes her seat beside CPT ELSON)*

*(to LILITH HART)*

If we're making a playlist, don't forget Bowie.

GASCOIGNE

*(To Lilith Hart)*

Gascoigne would prefer any of those over the garbage ringin' in Gascoigne's ears. Ain't about to share what Gascoigne prefers to people who wouldn't understand.

*(To CHERRY KILLS)*

Ya don't strike Gascoigne as someone who cares for nice things anyway.

*(Swallows a few glugs from his whiskey bottle)*

CHERRY KILLS

*(to GASCOIGNE)*

It's not that I don't like nice things. It's just that it's all...it's all a game. It's temporary. This spread, these luxurious napkins-us! Y'know?

LILITH HART

*(Trying to keep behind THEBES, she attempts to use American Sign Language to ask one of the servants, "Can you hear me? Are you Deaf?")*

CHERRY KILLS

(notices LILITH HART speaking sign language to one of the staff behind THEBES'S back)

GASCOIGNE

(Takes another swig before speaking to CHERRY KILLS)  
A game? Certainly. Temporary, not so much. Gascoigne's seen enough in Gascoigne's line of work to know that things are not always temporary.

DR MOREAU-WEBB

Monsieur Gascoigne is correct. I believe this night will work permanent changes in the revelers. Not that change is something to be feared. After all, stagnation is death, is it not Monsieur G?

GASCOIGNE

Not likely, doc. More like Hell.

CHERRY KILLS

(to GASCOIGNE)

And what line of work might that be?

GASCOIGNE

(Pauses for a moment, deep in thought, unsure if he should speak on his work.)

(To CHERRY KILLS)

Gascoigne's part of an old order—one that procures ancient relics through the hunting of beasts and men.

CPT ELSON

That's a funny way to say "Antique Salesman"  
(*wheezes laughter*)

CHERRY KILLS

(chuckles)

(clinks glass with the captain)

LILITH HART

(*Smirking as she resumes her seat at the table*)



(To GASCOIGNE)

Do you happen to be familiar with the notable archeologist Dr. Jones? I believe he describes his profession in a similar manner. You two would get on famously.

GASCOIGNE

(unamused, he reaches under his shirt and grabs a necklace threaded with teeth, horns and other misc body parts of beasts and slams it on the table)

You laugh at Gascoigne, but if not for the order, this world that allows you to have such fancy dinner parties, would not exist. Not only do we hunt for relics, but to keep the beasts at bay.

(Gaze grows increasingly intense at CHERRY KILLS)

How do you suppose Gascoigne knew your name, girl? Your mom was quite the difficult kill. Fire demonia are no easy feat.

THEBES

(to LILITH)

Can I help you? The servers can hear you perfectly well. Let's just say they are people of few words. None actually. I sign to them to keep the ambience focused on your conversation not mine. Though it looks like I'll have to have a word with GASCOIGNE at some point about that.

([Tinariwen - Sastana`gga`m](#) begins)

CHERRY KILLS

(turns to face GASCOIGNE but doesn't say anything. She searches his face)

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

(To GASCOIGNE)

I appreciate a good beast killing. Good on you, son. (*Cuts a slice of roast beast*).

CHERRY KILLS

(abruptly gets up from the table, puts her revolver to GASCOIGNE's chin and pulls the trigger)

(click)

(She stands there eye to eye with this beast of a man)  
Shooter, I thought you said this was loaded..

DR MOREAU-WEBB

And there it is Monsieur Gascoigne. The thing I lack that you hold. The killing instinct. I must destroy the pestilence, kill it as it killed poor Professor Rickard. And yet it eludes me at every turn. I lack the instinct for the hunt and the kill, and this foe exploits my lack. It knew the Professor was close to a cure and it sought him out and destroyed him, of this I am convinced. I would have my revenge on it, by any means, any means at all. Even if I am cast into Hell.

GASCOIGNE

(He holds another revolver against CHERRY KILLS gut and stares deeply into her eyes)

Gascoigne assures you, this one is very much loaded. Care to test your theory on how temporary things are?

(He takes the gun out of her hands and returns his to his trench coat) sit down, girl. I did your mother a favor.

(He turns his attention to DR MOREAU-WEBB)

Gascoigne understands, doc. However, you may be running a fools errand. Ever consider the pestilence may come from another source? Gascoigne's hunted many Nosoi in Gascoigne's day; they spread plague and disease like nothing you've ever seen. Could be one targeted your professor. You could make a valuable hunter.

(Takes a long swig of whiskey, keeping his eye on CHERRY KILLS)

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

(*frowning*)

Who brings GUNS to a dinner party???

RUHANA BEGUM

(holds her purse with gun tighter on her lap)

THEBES

(to MOREAU-WEBB and GASCOIGNE)

Gentlemen, your raw flesh is served. Goat and Bull this evening.  
(the servers roll in a platter of uncooked meat on a cart)

GASCOIGNE

(To FELICITY BERRYCLOTH)

Gascoigne could ask the same of you bringing a pigeon, witch.

(To THEBES)

Finally, the doc and Gascoigne can speak more of his troubles with pestilence over this...meat.

CHERRY KILLS

(her eyes remaining on GASCOIGNE)

My mother's death was a favor, huh? Well, as her daughter, it's my obligation to return the favor. Maybe after this drink? Enjoy your meat.

THEBES

(ignoring the commotion. To the table with rehearsed choreographed gesticulation and diction)

Embark on a culinary journey that transcends the mere act of dining. Our offering of raw goat and bull, prepared in the tradition of omophagy, invites you not just to taste but to partake in a ritual of awakening. This ancient practice, steeped in the mystique of Dionysian festivities, promises more than exquisite flavors—it promises transformation. As you savor each morsel, may you find yourselves transported to a realm of heightened senses and profound ecstasy, where the spirit is liberated, and the bond between the earthly and the divine is rekindled. Tonight, we dine not merely to satisfy hunger, but to awaken the soul to the sublime pleasures that lie at the very essence of existence.

GASCOIGNE

(To CHERRY KILLS)

You misunderstand Gascoigne. Your mother's second death, as a fire demonia, was doing her a favor, after she died in the house fire. You know, the one that started while only the two of you were home?

(Gascoigne smirks)

Gascoigne looks forward to you attempting to fulfill your obligation.

CPT ELSON

*(sighs, and takes one last swig of his whiskey. Speaking quietly)*

I'm going to get meself killed. Of course this happens when I come to the hillcountry, away from the sea.

*(standing again, speaking loudly)*

ENOUGH ye scurvy dogs, pass all yer guns forward, every last one of 'em. Sten go fetch yer coat and bring it to me. Mr. Gas-Can, with sincerest regrets, give me that gun too and any others ye have. Cherry--now we know yours is empty, no harm in passing it to me.

*(clapping his hands)*

CHOP CHOP. I don't want another gun drawn this evening. Ain't proper. Our host invited all of us for some reason or other, and we're bein' awful disrespectful tryna kill the other guests what our host wanted to honor at this table.

*(loudly, again)*

I'M NOT TAKIN' NO FER AN ANSWER. No more BLEEDIN GUNS you hear me? If any of you--ANY ONE OF YOU produces a gun I swear on me mothers urn that I will escort ye out the building, and I will answer to our host for the disrespect. Then we can all enjoy some raw goat and talk about our childhood trauma.

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(To Gascoigne)*

I have read of the Nosoi, Monsieur, though thankfully I have never seen them. And I appreciate your assistance. However, I am sure the pestilence is something else, its own thing entirely. *(He sighs)* I need some way to proof myself against it before I can rid mankind of its scourge.

*(He takes several slices of both goat and bull, places one in his mouth, and chews slowly. A single red drop runs from the corner of the doctor's mouth and drips to the table. His eyes appear far away.)*

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

The CAPTAIN is absolutely right. There is more than one way to discover what lies behind the curtain of the divine realm. My own late husband visits me from the grave, albeit in life insurance checks, but still. Guns are simply not the best way.

Perhaps THEBES is correct that this food will assist us, as CLAUDE there seems quite transported!

GASCOIGNE

(TO CPT ELSON)

Old timer, you ain't gettin' the guns, same as you ain't catchin' sea monsters or escortin' anyone out. Gascoigne only uses them in self defense when not huntin', so sit down and eat your dinner.

(To DR MOREAUX-WEBB)

You ever consider that maybe the Nosoi are the source of the plague, and they aren't so separate? Gascoigne ain't ever been anywhere sufferin' the plague where a Nosoi wasn't near. Too bad you ain't a hunter, or else ya could use the ancient elixirs we use to protect ourselves.

(He reaches over and grabs a few pieces of goat and bull, eats them whole and swallows as if they were nothing special)

CPT ELSON

I'm bubblin' awful hot, and I shan't stoop to the level of ye gun-totin', rascalizin' miscreants. I've a mind to get some air.

(To THEBES)

Mr. Thebes Sir, is there a balcony I might avail myself of to refresh me senses afore comin' back to this melee?

CHERRY KILLS

(places a hand on CPT ELSON's arm)

Let's have a drink. I promise, no more guns. Tell me, why do you think we're all here tonight?

CPT ELSON

I'd be much more amenable to talk if you'd give me yer gun.

(holds out hand expectantly)

And after I've gotten some air.

CHERRY KILLS

(motions to GASCOIGNE)

Handsome over there has it.

But if you really need air, I saw a balcony that way, through the curtain. Take a left. The door handle sticks a little.

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(TO GASCOIGNE)*

You are not listening to me, Monsieur. It is the pestilence, not a plague. And it does not come from the Nosoi. It is from, from, somewhere else. Somewhere...outside. *(Whispers to himself)* How do I know that?

*(The doctor puts a slice of the second meat into his mouth and begins to chew it as thoughtfully as he did the first).*

CPT ELSON

*(tips cap to CHERRY)*

My mistake. Thank ye kindly, Miss Cherry. I take me leave, I shall return.

*(CPT ELSON hobbles away, past the curtain, to the balcony)*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

Well, this does give me a bit more room

*(Pushes CPT ELSON'S plate away to make room for her bamboo plate, sitting between hers and ELSON'S china plate)*

GASCOIGNE

*(To DR MOREAUX-WEBB)*

Plague, pestilence, same thing. On the contrary, doc, Gascoigne is listenin' and tryin' to help you. Your cause is noble, and that Gascoigne respects. You are free to believe that it comes from-somewhere else-but at least consider what I've told ya. May come in handy one day for that revenge you're longin' for. Could be right, may not be the Nosoi, but there are other beasts out there that bring sickness and death wherever they go.

*(He watches CPT ELSON take his leave and feels slightly bad, however he pushes the feeling away)*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

CLAUDE, really, son. This whole meal you've been trying to protect yourself from ROSIE'S coughing fit, CHERRY'S allergies, and CPT ELSON'S spittle. GASCOIGNE might have murderous rage, but at least he has an ancient elixir that will solve all your problems.

GASCOIGNE

(Laughs dryly)

Murderous rage, ha, Gascoigne takes that as a compliment.

(Tips hat at BRENDA SHTILSHPANK)

(TO DR MOREAUX-WEBB and BRENDA SHTILSHPANK)

Gascoigne may have the answer to the good doctor's problem, but that elixir is reserved only for hunters of the order.

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

Oh come now, GASCOIGNE, surely it can't be that hard to either make an exception or quickly, even now, induct CLAUDE into your order as a hunter-scientist.

GASCOIGNE

Ain't that simple, and no, there's no exceptions. If the doc wanted in, and he'd have to *truly* want in, he'd have to go through the process. Could Gascoigne make it happen tonight? Sure, but it'd be much more difficult for the good doctor...and possibly fatal.

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

Well, CLAUDE, I, for one, think spending the rest of your life in fear of the pestilence is a worse fate than one night facing death.

GASCOIGNE

(He stares at BRENDA SHTILSHPANK surprised and impressed. He then turns his attention to DR MOREAUX-WEBB and awaits his reply)

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(He continues to eat the raw meat. He appears to no longer be aware of the room or the other guests)*

I see...

GASCOIGNE

You good, doc?

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

*(seeing MOREAU-WEBB space out, finally having had the last straw with this Dionysis something-or-other)*

Is this some kind of joke? There are certainly ways to commune

with the other side - uh, so I'm told - and none of them involve eating raw goat. I mean really, is this some kind of mockery? Spirits and Fae don't take kindly to being mocked, and neither do I. If the host intended to invite me here to make fun of me - I mean, of -... I want to speak to him...her...*them* at once, or I will *leave*.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To FELICITY)

Oh, honey. I think... I think you deserve an apology from me. This whole night you've been saying that strange things were underfoot. I didn't believe you. But the more I sit here, the more strange things I see. If anyone was guilty of mockery it's me. I'm sorry. Please stay. If something is not right, what is it?

FELICITY BERRYCLOTH

(to BRENDA, aware of the irony that the witch at the dinner party is the skeptic)

Thank you, but I am used to not being believed. Whatever is going on here is either some sort of strange hysteria, a joke, or the eccentricities of a rich person: none of which I'm very partial towards. If whoever made the food tonight had bad intentions, eating it means you're already one foot in the grave. But eating *raw meat*? I mean, seriously, now. Whip up a batch of saltwater and get that old quack some air and we'll be fine.

(to her pigeon)

I should have known you were trying to warn me, sweetheart. But don't worry. I don't fall for tricks *that* easy.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To FELICITY)

I am trying to be more open to you young folk. But help me understand why this is so serious. An elderly lady like myself fails to follow the thought process of you younguns.

FELICITY

(to BRENDA)

If you're auld yin, you should understand: it's not new-fangled. It's older than both of us put together. Old traditions. But



whoever has organized this party either is making fun of them, or is a practitioner of something I know nothing about and want no part of.

LILITH HART

Though usually a connoisseur of the bizarre and ghoulish, I also have no appetite for raw animal meat.

*(Stands, wine glass in hand, to move to the fireplace. As she rises, a locket tumbles from her pocket. It is sparkly, neon pink and bears the initials LEH. Upon seeing it fall to the ground, she immediately snatches it up, shoves it back in her pocket, and turns toward the fireplace as though contemplating the flames.)*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(To FELICITY)*

You're right. We shouldn't meddle with things that are older than ourselves. It's like I always told my grandkids when they were little---don't play with fire *(her eyes follow LILITH as she walks toward the fireplace)*

CHERRY KILLS

Demons, fae, *Nosoi*? Now I see what you all have in common. You're all delusional.

*(takes a cigarette from her case and puts it to her nose)*

LILITH HART

*(To CHERRY)*

I've seen plenty of strange things in my line of business. A word to the wise: Don't dismiss anything outright.

CHERRY KILLS

*(stops turning the cigarette in her hand and stares off into the distance)*

Strange things...yes.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

Well I am wondering what the strange thing was I saw fall out of LILITH'S pocket. Don't want to dismiss anything.

GASCOIGNE

(To CHERRY KILLS)

Come with on Gascoigne's next hunt; that fake toughgirl facade and that dismissive *eat shit* personality will crumble to dust.

CHERRY KILLS

(stands and smiles devilishly at GASCOIGNE, then walks through the curtain and out of the room)

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

CHERRY believes what she believes. She has as much right to sit at this table as the rest of us, GASCOIGNE. Now look what you've done! Now you owe her an apology, too!

GASCOIGNE

(To BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK)

Gascoigne has a right to challenge her beliefs, as much as she has the right to have 'em. 'Specially when she claims everyone's delusional but her.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

And who has the right to challenge your beliefs, GASCOIGNE? Who has the right to put you in your place?

GASCOIGNE

Anyone. Would love to see anyone try to put Gascoigne in his place. Gascoigne don't have beliefs, Gascoigne operates on truth and truth alone. Too many anymore cannot handle the truth.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

Well, that's something we agree on.

LILITH HART

Where would you rank linguistic correctness in the order of truth, Mr. GASCOIGNE?

And, Mrs. SCHTILSHPANK, my belongings have no need to be subject to scrutiny by this dinner party.

Could someone please enlighten me as to the nature of these so-called Nosoi?

GASCOIGNE

(Takes a final swig of whiskey, finishing his original bottle)

(To LILITH HART)

The way Gascoigne speaks has nothin' to do with truth, rather the fact that Gascoigne hardly speaks to anyone. Your insult falls on deaf ears, same as everyone else.

(Takes a heavy breath, slightly annoyed)

Nosoi, nasty little things. Demons of the plague. One of many things unleashed on Earth upon the opening of Pandora's box in ancient times. They bring plague and death wherever they go.

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

(To LILITH)

On the contrary, I think this dinner party calls for the utmost scrutiny if what FELICITY suspects is true.

LILITH HART

Who said it was an insult, Mr. GASCOIGNE?

*(Tutting, obviously pleased to have annoyed GASCOIGNE)*

So touchy.

But thank you for enlightening me.

*(To BRENDA SHTILSCHPANK)*

What import could my personal effects possibly have on this evening? With all the strange happenings tonight, my belongings are the least of our concerns.

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

(To LILITH)

Well, if you had a gun, for starters. And seeing as you dropped it already, I wouldn't trust your handling of it. If you haven't noticed, we've had a few incidents here since GASCOIGNE arrived.

GASCOIGNE

(To BRENDA SHTILSHPANK)

Gonna start friskin' everyone out of fear?

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

(To GASCOIGNE)

Unlike you, GASCOIGNE, I don't require violence to communicate my needs. A little more respect from you and people might actually listen to the truth you speak.

GASCOIGNE

(To BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK)

Ain't need respect from anyone, nor does Gascoigne hand out respect—unless it's earned. Only reason Gascoigne been so talkative in the first place, is the drink. Anyone here is welcome to Gascoigne's truth or not. Great way to dodge Gascoigne's question.

LILITH HART

Mrs. SHTILSCHPANK, I carry an onyx dagger to match my ring, but I have no further need for weapons.

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

(To LILITH)

Thank you for your transparency, dear. I trust you are in full possession of your faculties to be carrying it around? I always advise to leave weapons at home when choosing to partake in drinking festivities. Since the CAPTAIN stepped out, as the elder in the room, I feel it is my responsibility to keep an eye on your safety.

CHERRY KILLS

(returns carrying a black and white cat)

Look who I found trying to get out onto the balcony.

(the cat jumps out of her arms and up to Gascoigne, weaving in and out between his legs, purring.)

Do you two know each other?

GASCOIGNE

(He freezes and looks at the cat weaving around his legs before looking up at CHERRY KILLS)

This some sorta sick joke on Gascoigne?

(He reaches down and picks the cat up to inspect it)

Ah..you're not Lucy.

(He starts petting the cat and lets it sit in his lap, slightly loosening his demeanor)

Looks like Gascoigne's cat from a lifetime ago. Haven't had one since.

THEBES

(puts another bottle of scotch down on the table himself)

Someone in the room here must be attracting cats

(Thievery Corporation - The Outernational Sound begins)

CHERRY KILLS

(picks up the bottle of scotch and pours a glass for everyone at the table. She raises her glass)

I'd like to make a toast.

(she rises, stands in front of the fire, looking into the flames, smiling)

To the strange. To the light...and the dark. To the valiant and cowardly. The sick and the healthy. Duality.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(has been steadily giggling at the unfolding drama. Is now significantly drunk. It's hard to tell if he's uncaring or if his sanity rests on a razor thin edge)

(to CHERRY KILLS, drunkenly)

Hear, hear!

(drains his glass. gets up, wobbling, and also moves to beside the fire)

Also... I'm sorry about that gun. In truth, I can't quite remember which ones were loaded and which ones weren't. I could've sworn yours at least had blanks or something. To make up for it, I was thinking maybe you could try...

(he pats the sides of his body and freezes. Then he squints, recalling an old, regrettable, surprisingly sober memory)

(to ALL)

No one has seen my jacket have they?

THEBES

(walks by CHERRY and surreptitiously takes a glass of scotch and knock it back)

GASCOIGNE

(Raises his glass of scotch and downs it effortlessly)

(Mutters to himself while looking at the purring cat)

Duality.

(Turns his attention to STEN SALINGTON)

Only thing worse than a drunk idiot, is a drunk idiot that's lost his guns. Even more, one that can't remember if they're loaded or not.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(to GASCOIGNE)

Whether they're loaded... or empty... I'd stake my stellar reputation on pointing one your way to find out. CHERRY's attempt has got me wondering if maybe I should go looking for those other guns.

(foolishly feels as if he's got one up on GASCOIGNE. With alcohol coursing through him, STEN new realises he's finally made up his mind. He hates GASCOIGNE)

What do you think, oh brave, mysterious, big bully Mr Gas-Coin?

GASCOIGNE

(His face grows scarily serious and his body becomes rigid once again. He places the cat on the ground next to him)

Hey Sten...

(Within the blink of an eye, his arm whips out and grabs Sten by the neck, lifts him off the ground and slams him down on his back next to the fire. All he sees is red. He spits venom through gritted teeth)

Listen here you pudgy piece of shit, you think some half-assed threat is gonna scare me? Gascoigne kills men for much less. You think Gascoigne is going to let your grubby little fingers get ahold of your jacket full of garbage? Think again. Here's something for you to sit and chew on; know where Gascoigne got his guns? King himself. Gascoigne will pay him a visit after this dinner party and tell him all about his failure of a son. How 'bout that?

(Roughly tosses Stens head to the side when letting go)

Gascoigne warned you. You're lucky your not leaving in a bag, or pieces.

(He walks off in the direction Sten originally left with his jacket)

Come after Gascoigne, and you will be.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To STEN)

Son, I've already come to your defense once. But this time, you're in the wrong. I've become...aware...of things I haven't been aware of when I first arrived. This is not the time to make enemies. We need each other. Something tells me we need each

other to make it through this night. (*Slices a piece of roast beast and carries it to STEN's plate*)  
(To CHERRY, *lifting glass of wine, she stands next to CHERRY, LILITH, and cat by the fire*) To our enemies and to our friends.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(wheezing, calling after GASCOIGNE. There's a tremble hiding in his voice, but this is perhaps, for the first time, he sounds a little ominous)

Oh yeah, well I'd bloody like you to try and contact my father! Something tells me he's not going to be replying anytime soon!  
(vainly watches as GASCOIGNE keeps walking. Sits up, dusts himself off. Embarrassment tries to hit him, but he's still drunk)

(to BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK)

Surely you must admit we'd be better off without such a tyrant! Spare me the knife... or any old cutlery really. I reckon I could get him with it. Maybe we all could! Just jump out and surprise him when he gets back. That'd show him.

(he's not thinking straight)

That is assuming he doesn't come back with any loaded guns. God, I need another drink.

(moves back to his seat. To himself)

A sadistic, lonely host gathers tortured souls to torture each other further... I suppose I should've seen this all coming.

GASCOIGNE

(He overheard everything STEN says using his altered hearing from being a hunter)

(*A bowie knife flies through the curtain where he left, impaling itself in the table where STENS glass was, dousing him*)

(He shouts from somewhere behind the curtain)

There's your cutlery! Have at it "Shooter"!

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To STEN) Who is the tyrant? The one who speaks the truth or the one who covers it up so no one will ever know? (*Glances at knife in the table*) There will be no backstabbing in this room as long as I have anything to say about it.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(staring intently at the knife, colour draining from his face)  
You've suddenly become very convincing, BRENDA. Perhaps it would be best to wai-... *forget* about all of this unpleasantness.

(to THEBES)

It appears my glass is the first victim of the night. I'm sure Mr Gascoigne is very sorry..

(he pauses for far too long, perhaps wondering if the shards of glass are big enough to be weapons, but shakes his head of it)  
... as am I. Would you be able to grab me a new one?

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(Picks up cat, sits back down in seat, pets cat in lap. To herself, a smile on her face)*

Ah, grandchildren.

CHERRY KILLS

*(scratches the cats head on BRENDA'S lap)*

*(whispers to BRENDA)*

Who are you, really?

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Emerges from his trance. He looks around with curiosity, as though he is seeing everything in a new light).*

Who are any of us tonight? We have been given license to draw back our veils, to reveal new and perhaps previously unknown aspects of ourselves. This is not necessarily a comfortable process. Still, I think we should trust in our host. We are guests, and there are rules of hospitality which do, I think hold. Especially in a place such as this. If we feel tortured then we have brought that here ourselves, it has not been inflicted upon us. My advice is to accept tonight's events. If we all participate willingly, I believe it can only benefit each of us the more.

*(He calls to GASCOIGNE)*

Monsieur Gascoigne, your advice is welcomed. I understand it comes from your own experience and is well intended. However, it is based on an assumption. How sure are you that all tonight's guests traveled here from the same place? Your experience cannot directly apply to my situation if the laws of my home differ from yours. A hypothesis only, of course.



BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To CHERRY) I'm just an old woman who likes to share with all creatures. (*Gives the cat a lick of her fork before patting it off her lap onto the floor*) (To FELICITY'S PIGEON) Better keep an eye on this one, little bird.

(To CLAUDE) Who are we? We are just a band of misfits eating a meal together. There are those of us here that you can see (*motions to the guests in the room with an outstretched arm*), and those of us you can't see (*motions to the seats of GASCOIGNE, CPT ELSON, and MRS DEPRESSED.*) The visible and the invisible. But we are bound together by this moment and by this experience. In my eyes, it doesn't matter where you've come from or what laws applied to you before. It only matters that you're here now. It only matters that we are together. And that we don't kill each other before the night is over. Now pass me some of those sauteed bitter greens.

GASCOIGNE

(Re-enters from the curtain he left from with STEN'S jacket. His piercing eye remains on STEN the entirety of his walk back to his seat. Before sitting, he speaks directly to STEN)

Care to tell everyone why your coat was bein' worn by the suit of armor in the hallway?

(He holds STEN'S jacket up and bounces it mockingly before tossing it into the fire, guns included)

Thanks for the extra ammo, Gascoigne was low and ammo ain't cheap.

(Smiles a crooked grin)

Gascoigne is sure you already knew that.

(He grabs the bottle of whiskey he was drinking with CPT ELSON, reaches over the table for his Bowie knife and sits back down in his seat by the fire)

(To DR MOREAUX-WEBB)

Ain't assuming anything, just tellin' you what Gascoigne knows and offerin' ya a new path since the one your on ain't workin'. It's easy to back down when ya believe our situations, homes and laws we abide by are so different. Gascoigne's tellin' ya, your just blind to the real world, as most are. Ya choose to believe that the pestilence is a thing entirely of it's own and and I tell ya, it ain't. This world was paradise before the gods cast their wrath upon us, the order's archives say as much.

Pestilence ain't exist before that—before the beasts. Why else would the order have the cure to what your seeking? Because we target the source, not the byproduct.

(Takes a swig, whiskey drizzles down his chin)

Anyway, you've been called upon to join the order—a rare chance offered to few—and that is not something you can ignore.

Gascoigne needs a yes or no, but be warned—your answer is final. Will ya choose to join the order, and gain immunity to the pestilence in order to further your research, or will you cower from this path and continue in vain, failin' your late professor? Choice is yours.

(He clicks his tongue and the cat jumps back into his lap)

DR MOREAU-WEBB

My apologies, Monsieur. I did not speak clearly enough. What if the laws our homes follow are different because they do not, in fact, share a common world?

*(He continues to eat, appearing to drift off into a further trance)*

GASCOIGNE

(Puzzled by that statement, he laughs dryly)

Gascoigne ain't sure what you mean, unless ya got a spaceship to take ya back to your home world.

(He mutters to himself)

That would explain a few things.

(He continues talking to DR MOREAU-WEBB)

We live in this world, together, no?

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(quietly, to himself. His words aren't quite sad, but rather hollow)

That was... my dad's jacket...

(looks uneasy in his own skin, watching the flames lick the exotic material into oblivion)

And now he... And now it's gone... He'd be so damn mad.

(looks at GASCOIGNE. Still to himself, through gritted teeth)

He'd be very mad indeed.

(he imagines the things he would do if all brute force options hadn't just been burned to a crisp)

CHERRY KILLS

(to THEBES)

When can we expect our host? Will they join us for dessert?

Coffee, perhaps? Are they the goddamn valet?

(demeanor changes to calm as she walks over to STEN)

I know a little something about complex relationships, Shooter. Your dad did you wrong. The true measure of a man is how he treats those around him. Your dad may have been crowned, but he doesn't sound like a very good king. How can one lead without compassion? My father lacked compassion, too...

(turns abruptly to face GASCOIGNE. To GASCOIGNE)

I'm willing to put aside everything. I believe that Brenda is right, we need to unite. This isn't a normal dinner party. Gascoigne, you told me that you killed my mother after she'd turned into a fire demon. So, you and I have a connection outside of this—wherever we are. You also said that you've been in contact with the king. You have a connection to Shooter. That doesn't seem coincidental. But I suppose it doesn't really matter, does it? I don't believe you have any more idea about what's going on here than the rest of us. So, let's all agree to stand together. Let's stand together, and let's demand this to end.

GASCOIGNE

(To CHERRY KILLS)

Oh, Gascoigne has his own ideas about what's goin' on here, but Gascoigne doesn't know more than any of ya. Gascoigne can tell you one thing though, ain't no coincidence Gascoigne is here.

(He notices STEN is all but shooting steam out of his nose and ears)

(To STEN)

Speakin' of coincidences, Gascoigne doesn't believe he was here to listen to whatever excuse ya came up with to snake your way into this dinner party. See, Gascoigne knew King. He may of been an asshole, but a punctual asshole that never missed a meetin'. So, "Shooter", care to enlighten Gascoigne?

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To CLAUDE) In the end it's the scientist who rejects truth. Or at least, only seeks the answers he wants, rather than the truth that could help us all! At my age, I want to just sit by the

fire and watch my grandchildren lead this world into a better place. But it sounds like it's time for me to come out of retirement.

(To GASCOIGNE) Sign me up for your order, honey. I can use my communication skills to turn the Nosoi from their evil ways. Or at least distract them while you shoot to kill. I can't pass up an opportunity to help my grandchildren, and all the grandchildren of the world! When something is being offered for free and the only price is my life, it's an easy choice!

(To CHERRY) I couldn't have said it better, dear. We need each other.

(To STEN) Even you. No matter what you did.

GASCOIGNE

(To BRENDA SHTILSHPANK)

That's very brave—and unexpected—of ya. Gascoigne is sorry to say that option ain't on the table. Simply, ya ain't young enough; ya wouldn't survive the trials. The chance that ya would is slimmer than findin' a basilisk. When a hunter finds a potential, it is because they are young enough and have a path that naturally fits into the order. The doc is of the right age and—gascoigne thought—had a mission that aligned with the order, considerin' he said he was willin' to do anything to achieve it. Ain't exactly come here lookin' for a newblood, but there are others here that fit the bill. You ain't one of 'em. The order has ways of reversin' aging and extendin' life, but you've gotta already be part of the order. Like Gascoigne says, chances you survive the trials are slim to none.

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

*(Tearing up with frustration and grief)* It's hard to sit here and want to help, to be involved, to be a part of something big...and all I really am good for is passing the Alligator Tail. *(Slices some Alligator Tail, places a piece of it on her china plate, a piece on her bamboo plate, and a piece on CLAUDE'S plate, on top of what is left of the raw goat and bull.)*

LILITH HART

*(Her usual sarcasm is absent from her voice as she sits beside BRENDA SHTILSCHPANK)*

Would you please pass the alligator tail, BRENDA?

*BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:*

*(Struggling to speak through the tears, cuts a slice of Alligator Tail and passes it to LILITH, then, unable to restrain herself, gives LILITH an awkward side hug). For you, dear.*

LILITH HART

*(Very awkwardly returns the side hug, clears her throat, then picks at the alligator tail as though unsure what to say next.)*

CHERRY KILLS

*(storms out in an attempt to leave the party)*  
I'm leaving. Where's my coat?

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Takes a bite of the cooked alligator, it seems to restore some connection to the here and now for him)*

Monsieur, I may be wrong. But you accept the existence of other places of existence. You must, for you accept the existence of demons. Look at us around this table. Such a disparate group. Are we really all from the same world? You say you know 'King', but is that truly the same 'King' who is Shooter's father, or a near identical version of him in your place of existence?

*(He shrugs)*

For me, all I truly know is I came a damn long way to get here, and by a road through the Black Forest I'd never seen before and would have sworn to you didn't exist. And yet here I am.

*(To BRENDA)*

Thank you. It was just what I needed.

GASCOIGNE

*(To DR MOREAU-WEBB)*

Well, Gascoigne knew you were a doctor, but didn't know ya were a quack. Gascoigne exists here, in this world and the Black Forest is very real, and very dangerous.

*(Hollers at CHERRY KILLS)*

Ya hear that? Best a luck to ya leavin' at this hour through the Black Forest.

*(Continues speaking to DR MOREAU-WEBB)*

Gascoigne is assumin' your answer is no, since ya keep dodgin' the question. Fine by Gascoigne. Best be careful with your loose grip on reality, not all folks tolerate that kinda talk. Let Gascoigne ask ya this though, doc, regardless of what "world" we come from, why are ya so quick to dismiss the very thing ya been searchin' for? Gascoigne thinks you like things the way they are. Maybe the tragedy of your professor ain't as mysterious as it seems. What would ya have in life, if not for this obsession for the pestilence, hmm?

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Stares at GASCOIGNE)*

For a man who fights demons, Monsieur, you are extraordinarily concrete in your approach. Perhaps that is a necessity, mind you. An absolute focus on the physicality of your fight. Any thought that questions your beliefs may cause a tiny delay in your response, and that may be deadly. I do not believe the pestilence arises from your demons, Monsieur. But I would hear more of anything that may help me fight it, such as your elixirs and transformations.

GASCOIGNE

*(he scratches the cat under the chin with one hand while taking a swig of whiskey with the other)*

Beasts are easy, it's humans that're hard. Say what ya will about Gascoigne's approach, but it's always gotten the results that Gascoigne's been after for as long as Gascoigne has been Gascoigne—and that's a long ass time. Ain't gonna tell ya again, Gascoigne don't have beliefs. Gascoigne operates solely on truth; truth Gascoigne seen with his own eyes, and truth been shown to him by the order.

*(Reaches in one of his trench coat pockets and slams a small brown tincture wrapped in some kind of cloth down on the table)*  
This, doc, is your truth. The elixir that cures man of any disease and keeps 'em immune. Made by scientists of the order workin' off research older than any texts available to society. Hell, even Gascoigne knows what's in it and knows that you'll never be able to replicate it.

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

*(Recovering composure, with a new sense of appreciation for CLAUDE)* My dear, you heard GASCOIGNE, he only knows the truth of what he sees first hand. You've seen things he hasn't seen, as hard as that is for him to admit. But I am hoping that both of you, with your unique skill sets, can help all of us figure out how to survive this night in one piece.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

*(has been avoiding the question for some time)*

*(to GASCOIGNE)*

I don't-... I don't see how my father is relevant in any of this! There was a meeting, he couldn't come, I did. Simple!

*(he swallows hard, unsure if he believes what he just said)*

*(to GASCOIGNE, a little harsher)*

Besides, I don't know if you've earned an answer to King's whereabouts, Gascoigne. You've threatened me, you've bullied and scared everyone else, you *burned* dad's jacket, and you just made poor Brenda cry... and you expect me to hand over information like we're... what... *friends*?

*(madder)*

For a man that knows everything, I can't help but admit it feels damn good to know something that you don't, even if it is a terrible truth.

*(he's wobbly now, and his eyes have gone glassy for the second time tonight)*

*(quietly, to himself)*

I really don't want to talk about it...

CHERRY KILLS

*(Comes back into the room. Her eyes are wild and her hands are balled into fists)*

We're locked in. The door won't budge and the servants either don't understand me, or won't help. I can't find Thebes anywhere.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

Gee, sure would be nice to have a jacket full of guns right about now. Then we could just BAM, blow open the doors! But alas... it's just another thing he's messed up...

(eyes GASCOIGNE, seemingly ignoring all urgency in the situation to satiate his hate)

CHERRY KILLS

(to STEN)

Save it! We don't have time for this.

(to nobody particular)

If our host doesn't show up soon, I'm afraid that I'll need to show them who I really am. And if they think Gascoigne is mean...

GASCOIGNE

(He stuffs the elixir back in his trench coat and glares at STEN. He speaks calmly, not an ounce of worry over STEN)  
Ain't gotta confirm King's whereabouts, when ya so clearly gave Gascoigne the answer. Without your daddy to protect ya, best be watchin' your back. Now pipe down ya oversized waste of space, the adults are talkin'.

(Sighs and pinches the bridge of his nose)

(To everyone)

If this is how ya all react when there's hardly a problem, you're all goners.

(To CHERRY KILLS)

As Gascoigne said before, the door may be locked, but the real problem is out in them woods. Ya wander off these grounds and you're as good as gone.

LILITH HART

*(Her face has been flushing brighter for some time now, like a kettle about to boil. Suddenly she stands up, yelling.)*

All right, then! If we're trapped here with no recourse but each other, nothing between us but secrets, then here - !

*(Reaches into her pocket and pulls out the sparkly pink locket with LEH on the front and throws it on the table)*

No more secrets, any of you!

My name isn't Lilith. It's Lily Elizabeth Hart. Yes, Hart of Hart's Sweet Shoppe. I'm the daughter of Daniel Hart, the sweet shop mogul. And sometimes I...

*(She pauses, her voice breaking)*

...buy pumpkin spice lattes. But just because my charmed life in no way justifies this -

*(Gestures to her outfit, her whole vibe)*



doesn't mean I don't belong here. We have to get out of this place, and I sense that we'll need all of us, secrets or no, in order to make it out alive.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(Reaches for pink locket, admires it)*

*(To LILITH)* It's lovely, dear. Pink--and black--really suits you. Squid ink or pumpkin spice...you're supposed to be here tonight. We all are. *(Places locket back on the table, gently, as if handling a treasure)*

GASCOIGNE

*(Watches LILITH'S outburst with a mix of confusion and amusement)*

*(Mutters to himself)*

The hell is a pumpkin spice latay..

CPT ELSON

*(heard approaching by the thumping of his peg leg. He hobbles in and brushes the curtains aside)*

I'm back, all ye party-folk, I feel much lighter fer catchin' some air.

*(counts everyone in the room)*

I see none of ye managed to kill yeselves or each other. I've been chewin' on what's amiss with this party, and I had a revelation. With all due respect to Mr. Thebes and our mysterious host, what if we all picked up and went our separate ways? Nothin' stoppin' us leavin' s'far as we know, eh? As pleasin' as it is to know all ye, it might be time to call it a night. What say ye? I'm all mystieried out, beggin' yer pardon Mr. Thebes, and rather than wonder, perhaps the only way to win is not to play?

*(returning to his seat and sipping from his drink)*

Anyhow, what'd I miss?

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

*(to CPT ELSON)*

Oh, not much, just a few loonies who think it'd pay to "work together." As if.. As if this band of fools and failures could ever come up with anything good. Oh, and we're trapped!

*(to GASCOIGNE)*

And you really, really don't know, so don't even pretend you do.  
I- I don't need protecting anymore.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To CPT ELSON)

STEN summed it up quite well. The only thing I'll add, other than you must try this tender Alligator Tail, is that CLAUDE is an alien, GASCOIGNE likes cats, KING SALINGTON'S vest is burnt to a crisp, but his son is still alive, CHERRY has superpowers, and LILITH and I, well, let's just say, we're wonderfully average.

GASCOIGNE

(Sets cat down near CPT ELSON'S peg leg so it can use it as a scratch post)

One way or another, ain't no way your goin' home right now, old timer.

(Speaks to STEN without looking at him)

Only fool here tonight is you, for thinkin' your anything but a failure. Oh, Gascoigne knows. Gascoigne has seen many of your kind throughout the years.

(Looks STEN directly in the eyes)

Backstabbers. Ya get off on the power ya think you've acquired, but really you're just an empty shell of what was. Even less, actually.

THEBES

(hurrying back and speaking to the room)

Pardon me ladies and gentlemen, If I can have your attention. I understand that everyone is restless. Your host will present themselves momentarily. I'm sure they'll be able to explain more about why you are all here.

(the lights dim, the cat squeals, the fire surges)

CHERRY KILLS

(moves close to GASCOIGNE)

THEBES

(to the room)

Honored guests, may I present your host

EVANDER (Handsome ageless man with long hair and dark skin, he wears a suit and cape, his voice commands the room in a smooth, hypnotic tone)

EVANDER

Good evening everyone. My name is Mr. Dion Evander, your host here tonight. Thank you for coming to the Dinner Party. Why are you here?, I'm sure you've asked. And now I can tell you, I've gathered you all together on behalf of the spirit realm. I'm acting as a steward you might say. Facilitator. You see, indeed you do all have something in common. It might feel like nagging guilt, or sorrow, maybe an anxious fear, perhaps pain or emptiness, but for each of you there is someone who has left this world with unfinished business. Someone or some thing that needs a resolution. And they're holding you accountable. I can't vouch for their intentions. Some will haunt, some will play foul, some will probably want you to join them. And your presence here tonight for our Anthesterian Rituals has summoned them all here now

(the flames in the fire extinguish, the chandelier burns out and the candles blink out - the room is suddenly very cold and a chorus of howls and voices descend into the room)

GASCOIGNE

(Stares at EVANDER so fiercely a hole might burn through him. His focus moves from EVANDER as he listens to the howls of the dead)

Ah, shit.

(He reaches into his trench coat and pulls out two unknown viles, downing them in seconds. He tosses them to the ground as his eye turns bright yellow. Reaching back in his trench coat he removes the Bowie knife that was tossed at STEN. He assumes one of many fighting stances and waits.)

CPT ELSON

*(wheezing laughter)*

Glad I came in from the balcony! Almost missed our host! Bless ye, Thebes! And Bless ye, Mr. Evander for a fine meal and...

*(quietly)* I don't blame ye for yer choice of guests, sounds like

yer hands were tied (*CPT ELSON taps his nose, then resumes speaking normally again*) anyhow sounds like the skeletons in the ol' closet are here fer some kind of reckoning. Or, somethin' more sinister. This has now become the strangest dinner I've e'er had, that...matter on that south pacific island... can finally be put out of mind.

*(sips his scotch)*

Will our ghostly guests be makin' themselves known or shall they be speaking through your hostliness?

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(pulls shawl from pillowcase sack and covers her shoulders with it. She grips her sack like a security blanket)* (to CPT ELSON) I think they are making themselves known quite loud and clear, dear.

CPT ELSON

If I jumped every time I heard some otherworldly howl I'd have gotten a pogo-stick instead of a peg-leg. If they could only stop howlin' and explain what they want, we can satisfy the ghosts and move on to dessert.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(To CPT ELSON)*

GASCOIGNE doesn't seem to think this is a laughing matter. And neither do I. I would rather not encounter your ghosts of Catoblepas and the Great Squid of Orkney Island.

CPT ELSON

Just as likely it's me dear leg come back to kick me for not goin' after it.

*(wheezing laughter)*

Okay, okay, ye have a point, Miss Brenda, no more joshin' about. I'm tryna think which ghost could be comin' back fer me, Mr. Evander did they identify themselves to you or shall we guess their natures?

GASCOIGNE

*(Starts barking at CPT ELSON over the howling dead)*

Don't ya start mockin' them, ya old fool! If ya saw what Gascoigne sees, you'd be paler than the dead!

CPT ELSON

Perhaps it's a good thing I can't see them, Mr. Gas-Can! Can ye point out which-a-one seems to be menacin' me? What are ye seein' now? Tell us sir, as we're all dyin--er, eager to know.

GASCOIGNE

(Backs up slowly into a corner staring up at the ceiling, his eye circling around the ceiling)

(To CPT ELSON)

Ain't how it works! Gascoigne can tell ya that ain't a single one of 'em friendly! One of the elixirs Gascoigne took allows him to see the miasma, the other allows him to physically touch 'em. Gascoigne will put it to ya simple, friendly spirits have white miasma, evil ones have black...the entire ceiling is a swirling pool of darkness!

(Back against the wall, with his free hand he reaches into his trench coat and tosses three vials to the floor and then does the same with another three)

(To EVERYONE)

Three of them vials allow you to see em, and three of 'em allow you to fight 'em! Gascoigne warns ya all; ya ain't hunters so there's gonna be side effects! For the poor souls that ain't get a vial, well, Gascoigne ain't have any advice for ya!

LILITH HART

*(Quickly darts and grabs the nearest vial)*

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

Oh fuck...

(looking up at the roof, face gaunt)

Dad! Dad, are you... Oh my God.

(to GASCOIGNE)

He's up there isn't he? Oh my God, he's up there. Can you see him? Tell me you can see him.

(Back to the roof)

I'm sorry! I really am sorry!

(looks at the vials, then to GASCOIGNE, he's filled with a horrified fury)

How do we know we can trust you? After everything, how?!

(bites his lip. His vindictive side takes over)

Also I bloody knew bringing guns was a good idea. I hope you're all regretting judging me right about now.

GASCOIGNE

(His focus doesn't leave the ceiling)

(To STEN)

Ya can't shoot spirits ya goddamn idiot! Trust Gascoigne or not, makes no difference to Gascoigne! Reap what you sow, ya fat pi-  
(He suddenly rolls out of the way, dodging a massive black cloud that swoops down for him, partially taking shape Of some giant beast, but returning to a shapeless mass. Once out of the roll, he jumps back a few feet while tracking the mass)

LILITH HART

(*Eyeing the vial in her hand*)

How do I know if this is a fight-them bottle or a see-them bottle?

GASCOIGNE

(Flips his bowie knife into a reverse grip, still tracking the lumbering mass)

Ya don't! If your eyes turn yellow, that's a see-'em bottle!

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

Dad, if you really are up there, please don't hurt me! I don't want to drink the vial! I'm your son! And yeah... I made some mistakes the other night... And yeah... you're a ghost... And yeah... I'm a big failure and I... And I... I'm scared!

(considers the vial one more time. Looks at EVANDER, then to GASCOIGNE. Must he really decide the lesser evil?)

(to EVANDER, desperately)

But they must be the ghosts after my dad, mustn't they? He was meant to be here. This fate is his! I don't deserve this!

CHERRY KILLS

(grabs a vial and downs it without hesitation)

Where are you, mom?

(doubles over in pain)

Oh, God, what the-

(looks up and screams)

(snatches the second vial and downs it)

(as if peeled from the wall, the black cloud takes the shape of a humanoid. Its face morphs between human and demon)

You are not her. You are a lie! I was only a child! What was I to do? Run into the fire?

(she picks up her cigarette case and throws it as the specter, but it sails straight through it)

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(watching CHERRY seemingly lose her mind. To ALL, frantic)  
See! See! It makes you mad! I swear it's poison. I won't take it. Besides, I don't need to see them or fight them, I just need to talk.

(his heart doubles in speed, realising the one thing standing between him and survival might just be the craftiness of his brain)

(to ghosts)

Father! You wretched bastard! Come to me!

CHERRY KILLS

*(steps back knocking over a bottle of wine on the table. She watches the specter descend. Her mother's face is almost angelic, she wants to run to it, to kiss it, but it smiles, revealing jagged, broken teeth. It walks into the oversized fireplace. Her mother's face melts. Cherry screams.)*

Someone...please help me...oh God...

(a spectral figure swoops down to face STEN. No face can be made out, but it glows an angry colour)

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(to GHOST)

Dad...

(Sten takes a step back. His whole body is shaking. The ghost jolts forward suddenly, trying to startle him. Sten winces, but quickly grows infuriated with his father's tease. He takes a deep breath. He's still a little drunk, but perhaps that's the confidence boost he needs. Now... Sten is prepared to say the last thing he ever gets to say)

I know you didn't like me. And I know you always felt disappointed, and that you wanted something more. Christ, you named me Sten for God's sake, it really couldn't have been any

more obvious. But I'm done pretending that all your hate was my fault. I can't live every day drenched in fear of letting you down simply because I'm not you. You made me like this. And sure... *maybe* I killed you... but maybe I also freed myself. I don't want to be an arms dealer. I don't want to be spoiled. I don't want to be here...

(a tear spills from his eye)

I won't ask you for forgiveness... but perhaps you can find a way to let me go.

(the misshapen ghost floats in consideration. Sten is done being scared by it. He's said his piece. Now it's just live or die)

So, what d'you think?

(the ghost charges at Sten, plunging into his chest. The air is driven from Sten's lungs and his feet hover a few inches off the floor. He gasps for help)

CHERRY KILLS

(Looks at STEN horrified. Then, the fear is gone, and only anger remains. She runs up to the fireplace and plunges her hands into the flames. She holds the fire demon by its neck and screams)

I couldn't save her! You are not her! It wasn't my fault!

(her flesh burns. The tattoo of the hummingbird on her forearm wilts and blisters. She holds fast)

(screams to GASCOIGNE)

So how does one kill a fire demon, anyway?

GASCOIGNE

(His attention is drawn away from the spectral beast as he notices STEN hovering over the floor gasping for air and CHERRY holding what was once a fire demon at bay)

(Mutters to himself and lowers head momentarily)

God dammit...this is why Gascoigne works alone.

(Without hesitation he charges forward towards STEN grabbing a pouch of cleansed salt from his coat. At the same time he yells at CHERRY)

Ain't a fire demon anymore, use this!

(He tosses her his Bowie knife, which was blessed to fight off evil of all kinds. Seconds later he comes up on STEN and empties the pouch into his mouth)

Now FIGHT, STEN!



(The moment the last word leaves his mouth, the spectral beast takes form in front of him and carries him by the throat up to the ceiling)

CHERRY KILLS

(she catches the bowie knife with ease, surprised at how agile and strong she feels, she grins. She thrusts the knife into the neck of the evil spirit. She's thrown back as if she'd touched a live wire. A bellow, and then the flames within the fireplace surge.)

God, that felt...cathartic.

(looks up and sees GASCOIGNE in trouble. Jumps up to the table.)  
What...what can I do?

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

Too old, they say? (*Grabs a vial and drinks it, shakes violently and momentarily loses a heartbeat. She punches herself in the chest and the heartbeat restarts*). GASCOIGNE, you've fought alone too long. Time for us to fight for you and with you! (*She grabs a table knife and climbs onto the table*)

(Cherry smiles and nods at BRENDA)

GASCOIGNE

(Struggling against what he now knows is a pissed of spectral fomorian, he reaches out and grabs hold of one of it's horns. Yanking with all his strength, it snaps causing the beast to bellow a bloodcurdling scream. He uses that moment to slip from its grasp and lands on the table. He looks at BRENDA impressed, but says nothing. His attention turns to CHERRY)

(To CHERRY, the words leave his mouth painfully)

Ya can give Gascoigne his knife back now!

CHERRY KILLS

(Cherry tosses the knife to GASCOIGNE)

Catch! Sorry if it's a little charred!

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(to KING SALINGTON)

Dad... it really is you.

(seeing his father's ghostly face, he wants to take everything back, but he knows he can't)

(to KING SALINGTON)

I won't join you, Dad. You can't drag me down with you.

(considers the floor)

Or up... as it were. Regardless, it's time for this to end. For us... to end.

(places his hand on his dad's wrist. The ghost looks furious, like it's going to run off on one his famous one-sided scolding matches)

There's new people who need me now, and I won't start by letting them down.

(looks at GASCOIGNE)

I thought *he* was like *you*, Dad... but he saved me. And I can't ever forget that. I need to go.

(shares one final look with his truest tyrant)

Goodbye.

(crushes the ghostly wrist. His dad's hand evaporates. Sten instantly falls, getting wrapped up in one of the room's long curtains, descending with a crunch... but emerging surprisingly safe. He marches into the fray, bloodlust in his eyes)

(to ALL, proudly)

Alright! I've admittedly been a dick, but NO LONGER! Who the hell can I help!

GASCOIGNE

(Catches his knife and runs up to STEN, raising the knife. It plunges down, but only narrowly brushes STEN'S ear. Instead the blade slices through spectral KING like butter)

(To STEN)

For starters, make sure ya done helpin' yourself.

(Once again, his attention snaps right back to the fomorian beast that had just recovered from losing a horn. For a split second, he looks upon the ceiling and realizes it has grown no less dark)

(Mutters to himself)

This is gonna be a long night.

*BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:*

*(Watches as fomorian beast takes a foul step upon her bamboo plate, charges with the table knife, the knife barely scratches it, and the beast does not appear interested in her, but BRENDA feels the rush and exhilaration of battle) But where is my ghost, then?*

CHERRY KILLS

*(grabs a fire poker and runs to assist BRENDA)*  
Maybe you're here to do what you do best? Take care of people.

*BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:*

*(To STEN) Help us, STEN. This fomorian beast will take all our strength!*

*(To CHERRY) The night's still young. We'll see! (Takes another stab at the beast)*

GASCOIGNE

*(Realizes more spirits will be coming soon and he doesn't have time to fight the fomorian beast on his own. Looks to CHERRY, who impressed the hell out of him moments ago. Turns to her and places the knife in her hands)*

*(To CHERRY)*

*One shot, kid! Stab upwards into it's right shoulder blade!*

*(Without receiving confirmation from CHERRY, he runs off towards the looming beast and slides underneath. He backs himself against the wall and allows for the fomorian to approach. Once again, it snatches him, it's meaty hands crushing his torso and lifting him off the ground. He successfully turned its back to CHERRY)*

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

*(nods assertively to BRENDA. Gathers handfuls of cutlery in his arms. Starts flinging spoons at EVANDER)*

*(to EVANDER)*

*Stop this at once!*

*(sends a couple the beast's way)*

*You too! Get your hands off of GASCOIGNE!*

*(the fomorian is undamaged, but perhaps a little distracted from his prey)*

CHERRY KILLS

*(stands with the bowie knife in her hand, then slowly looks up and toward the beast. She runs at it. She stabs upward just as GASCOIGNE had instructed. A horrific roar escapes from it as it thrashes, knocking her back and onto the floor. It comes at her, its mouth frothing, then settles into a pile of dead meat at her feet.)*

Holy shit, that was...fun.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(To STEN) We did it! (Looks warily around the room, as the sounds of howls continue unabated.) Where is my ghost?*

*(Sten's enthusiasm doesn't seem to have dwindled after the beast's death. Instead, he's just gone back to throwing cutlery at EVANDER)*

GASCOIGNE

*(He gets up from his knees, stretching a bit and walks towards everyone)*

*(To EVERYONE)*

Keep your guard up, this ain't over by a long shot! That was only the first of what seems to be many!

*(Realizes STEN has accomplished these feats without drinking any elixir)*

*(To STEN)*

Ain't have the time to figure out how you're seein' this shit without the elixir, but quit fiddlefuckin' around with the cutlery. Subdue our host!

*(Gestures towards EVANDER)*

*(Shuffles over to CHERRY and holds his hand out for his knife)*

*(To CHERRY)*

Good job, kid. Gascoigne will make a hunter outta you yet. By the end of this, Gascoigne may just have to force ya into the order.

*(He cracks a grin and reaches into his trench coat, this time pulling out what seemed to be a primitive makeshift bandage smothered in some sort of ointment. He hands it to CHERRY.)*

Use this on your burns.

*(His serious demeanor returns and once again he begins watching the spiraling ceiling)*

(spotlight on THEBES eviscerated on the floor)

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Is conversing with a spirit that flickers between black and white)*

Professor, you must try to fight your urges. It seems that Monsieur Gascoigne has had the truth of the matter all along. Can you render any assistance to us now?

*(The spirit is tormented, clearly feeling both the urge to harm and the urge to help. With its right hand it grasps the doctor's shoulder. Seeming to draw strength it reaches inside itself, to where a mortal heart would be, and pulls forth a dark bladed dagger. DR MOREAU-WEBB takes it, then plunges it into the spirit's ectoplasmic form. The spirit fades and vanishes).*

Be at peace, my friend.

*(The doctor moves to stand next to GASCOIGNE and raises his dagger toward the ceiling).*

Monsieur, I find myself interested in the training you have suggested might benefit me.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

*(in his eyes, the rest of the ghosts are formless. Maybe it was his proximity or relationship with KING that had revealed him)*

*(to GASCOIGNE)*

Your freaky salt did an absolute number on me. I don't know if I accidentally swallowed that shit or spat it out whilst I was talking to Dad, but whatever happened it's effects are fading now.

*(watches another spoon bounce harmlessly off of EVANDER's head. He really thought a knife would be stuck in him by now. Decides to take GASCOIGNE's advice, dropping the rest of the cutlery so that he can charge towards EVANDER)*

*(LILITH HART crawls under the table chasing one of the vials so that she can have one of each type, but she has not yet taken either bottle. Her face has gone even paler, and she's shaking in fear.*

*She downs both of the vials one after the other, then collapses, convulsing and gasping.*

*After a few moments, the convulsions stop, and she sits up, only to jerk back with a scream as she suddenly sees a formless swirl of black in front of her.*

*The swirl of blackness begins to separate and multiply as LILITH scurries out from under the table and stands up.*

*A dozen, then two dozen shadowy forms surround her, speaking to her in a cacophony of whispers that the other guests can't hear.)*

LILITH HART

I didn't know, I didn't! I wasn't trying to meddle! I just wanted to *find* ghosts, not harm them! It was just a job, one that I thought would make my parents angry! I didn't know...

(The swirling black Mass congeals again and pummels into LILITH, hurling her into the fireplace. Screaming, she thrashes and pushes back against them until she is able to squirm out of the flames and tumble to the floor, her skin seared and her clothing still burning. LILITH hastily pats out the remaining flames on herself. The black mass surrounds her again, preparing to charge.)

LILITH HART

(To GASCOIGNE)

It sure would be nice to have a *knife* right about now!

CHERRY KILLS

*(the table, dishes, and paintings on the wall are all rattling)*

(to LILITH HART)

Your onyx ring! When you held out your hand, it moved back, like the ring was...a threat to it.

GASCOIGNE

(He ignores everyone else and rushes over to LILITH, while reaching into his trench coat for the flask of holy water he keeps tucked away)

(To LILITH, when he reaches her)

The onyx dagger!

(He holds his hand out)

NOW!

(He looks up at CHERRY while waiting for LILITH to produce the dagger)

(To CHERRY)

Quick, retrieve the largest blades ya can find in the kitchen! Gascoigne can bless a few of 'em!

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

*(Reaches for LILITH'S pink locket, still resting on the table. One thing the fomorian beast had not trampled upon. She throws it in LILITH'S direction)* You are enough, my dear! Go get 'em!

*(LILITH HART catches the locket tossed by BRENDA, clutches it in her hand for a moment, then tucks it into her pocket.)*

LILITH HART

*(Quietly, rather embarrassed)*

Oh, I forgot about the dagger.

*(Holding out her hand with the onyx ring to keep the shadows at bay for a moment, she reaches down toward her boot.*

*The shadows break apart, dodge around her ring, then re-form, clamping down around LILITH and pulling her up toward the ceiling. LILITH tries to reach the dagger in her boot, the locket in her pocket - anything - but can't get past the shadows.*

*Finally, she punches into the shadows with her onyx ring, and with a shriek like grinding metal, the shadows drop her.*

*LILITH falls the full height of the tall room and lands with a sickening thump on the floor in front of the fireplace. She lies still.)*

CHERRY KILLS

*(comes into the room holding two swords)*

I know you asked for knives, but I found something even better. Found em' hanging on the wall!

*(slides the swords down the length of the table to GASCOIGNE)*

BRENDA SHTILSHPANK:

*(Watches in horror as LILITH falls to the floor. She waits for Lilith to move again)* Lilith?

GASCOIGNE

(He tosses CHERRY his Bowie knife once more and stops both of the swords before they slide off the table)

(TO CHERRY and DR MOREAU-WEBB)

Both of ya are on defense! Doc, grab the last bottle of elixir and allow it to aid ya!

(To BRENDA)

Check the girl for a pulse, but don't ya move her!

(Attention back on the swords, he closes his eye and starts chanting in enochian while waving a hand over the blades. The blades begin violently vibrating and become hot to the touch. He continues chanting, his full trust in CHERRY and DR MOREAUX)

*(LILITH HART is unconscious and barely breathing. The shadows swirl above her as though hesitating, unsure if she is alive or now one of them.)*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(Kneeled down next to LILITH bending over, she searches for a pulse)* I am no doctor but this doesn't feel like it's supposed to. *(To LILITH)* Come on, honey, don't leave us.

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(Knocks back the elixir with a practiced flick of the wrist. Grimaces as he sees the spirits more clearly and slashes with his dagger at one that swirls too close from the tornado of blackness on the ceiling. It flies back upwards and howls an ear-splitting shriek. The smell of hot steel begins to fill the room).*

All comes to a head, Monsieur. Do not delay.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

*(crashes into EVANDER, knocking him to the ground. Struggles, trying to properly restrain him when he doesn't know how. Looks up at the persistently swirling ghosts, confused)*

How do we get it to stop?

GASCOIGNE

*(The chanting was now much more powerful, and his voice seemed to join with a chorus of disembodied voices. Some much lower, some higher. Everyone could feel the power resonate through*



their body. The blades glow red hot, fire dancing around them on the table. As he approaches the end of the blessing ritual, his eye shoots open glowing a bright white)

**A LAVA ZURAAHUS, IAD NAH IEH MAAH, PRDZAR TON DOALIM OD DRIX AQLO RIT EMNA SEM!**

(the chanting stops, his eye returns to being yellow and he bends over the table gathering himself, but only for a second. He then quenches the blades in holy water. They sizzle and stop vibrating. He picks them up, still smoking, jumps onto the table and rushes at the mass that tossed LILITH to the ground. Crossing his blades, he comes down on the mass slicing through it in an "x". The blades hot steel sings and sparks shower across the room. The mass fades to nothing.)

UNIDENTIFIED GHOST

(As the sparks and heat of GASGOINE'S blades fade, the room once again grows cold and dark, excepting the fireplace as it ignites and extinguishes at the whim of the spirits. The smell of camphor seeps into the room, diffusing like cool mist. It produces a chilling of the senses, as if the room were being slowly frozen into an ice block. The swirling black tornado slows, the howling of spirits quiets into a smothered whine. Whispers fall like snowflakes around the room, some sound close, others sound distant. A deep, garbled voice stands out among the whispers, but the location of the voice is unclear.)

Do you know who I am?

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(still kneeling next to LILITH, notices frost forming on her body. She looks up, searching for the ghost)*

UNIDENTIFIED GHOST

(To GASCOIGNE, CHERRY, DR. MOREAU-WEBB) Not exactly in my best interest to reveal myself is it, hunters?

GASCOIGNE

(He's standing next to CHERRY and DR MOREAUX dual wielding the swords in a defensive stance)

(To UNIDENTIFIED GHOST)

Reveal yourself or not. Gascoigne promises this; you'll be meetin' the edge of one of our blades tonight.

(He looks around the room, attempting to spot this bold apparition, yet the hunter vision bestowed upon him by the elixir reveals nothing)

UNIDENTIFIED GHOST:

And I can promise you this, hunters... My vendetta is not against you...for now. I am not endowed with the power to kill. At least, not directly. Mine is the power to wage war on the mind. (Deep, twisted laughter) that way you can never get rid of me completely. So pick your poison. Leave me to finish my task, and I'll leave your mind to torture itself without my influence.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(The adrenaline rush of battle returns and she leaps to her feet, wielding her table knife, counting herself as one of the hunters)* Reveal yourself and meet your just end! We're not afraid of you, and you can't bully us into doing a single thing!

UNIDENTIFIED GHOST:

(To BRENDA) Trying to be a hunter, I see. Would you kill me?

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

In defense of my friends, yes. Without question.

UNIDENTIFIED GHOST:

*(Deep voice garbled as if choking on water)* I'm not as strong as those other spirits. Feeble in life and in death. It would be easy enough. Go ahead...my dear.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(Hesitates for a moment)* Grandma B?

(A black mist descends from the swirling ceiling and stands before BRENDA. It materializes into the form of an elderly woman with an oversized hair bun, a near mirror image of BRENDA, except for two dark pits for eyes.)

(BRENDA turns to the hunters and lifts her hand as if to say "hold your fire.")

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

Grandma B, why are you here? I don't have any hard feelings toward you. Sure, you were tough on me. But I know you were just doing your best.

GHOST OF GRANDMA B:

*(Her voice is no longer disguised, but a sweet, though slightly cacophonous voice, resonating with regret. She walks over to the chair BRENDA had been assigned at dinner and put her hands on it)* I'm here, dear, because you haunt me. The memory I have of you. You never liked listening to my advice. You pushed me away. You never came to visit.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

I'm so sorry, Grandma B. I know now how that feels.

GHOST OF GRANDMA B:

I kept looking at that empty chair at my table *(she grips BRENDA'S CHAIR even tighter)* and I couldn't take the pain of it. So I got rid of it. *(She violently overturns the chair.)* I took that chair away. I erased you from my memory. And the day came that you returned. But I turned you away. I pushed you back out so hard you almost didn't make it.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

But I did make it, Grandma B. I'm okay. And I forgive you.

GHOST OF GRANDMA B:

But I'm not here just for you, honey. I'm here to make sure you don't take my place and haunt your grandchildren the way I am haunting you. Sure, my advice was good. But you didn't hear my advice because that wasn't what you needed the most. What you needed was a chair at my table. A place to turn to. No matter what. Promise me that you will do that for your grandchildren.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

But you know how they are!

GHOST OF GRANDMA B:

The world out there is full of Nosoi and pestilence and wicked beasts. They travel through the Black Forest every day and some days they barely make it out alive. When they do come home, they

don't owe you the answers to every one of their mysteries. Maybe they'll talk. Maybe not. They just need you. The space between you doesn't need to be filled with words for it to be filled with love. Promise me. (*She turns away from the overturned chair to the fireplace to face BRENDA*)

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

I promise. Be at peace, Grandma B.

(The GHOST OF GRANDMA B disintegrates into black snowflakes. The room returns to its prior state.)

(Brenda kneels to pick up the fallen chair.)

DR MOREAU-WEBB

(*Has been watching the exchange between BRENDA and the ghost of her grandmother intently*)

Ah, I see now. They are a reflection of our inner selves. (*To GASCOIGNE*) Your inner self is violent and direct, Monsieur, and so that is how the spirits respond. And I allowed your psyche to... *infect* me. No, I must remain pure. The Professor's gift is an instrument of his vengeance, of course. But I do not think it is a weapon. At least, not directly. But I know what it may be. (*Dr MOREAU-WEBB plunges the Professor's black dagger, that was his mentor's spiritual heart, into his own breast. It passes through skin and bone without cutting and without blood, and is absorbed entirely by his body. The doctor sinks to his knees. Black smoke billows from his mouth, surrounding him in a cloud that rapidly hardens to an impenetrable carapace of glistening black. The doctor is now entirely cocooned.*)

GASCOIGNE

(He watches, unsurprised, as DR MOREAU entombs himself with the black dagger. He sighs heavily)

(To CHERRY)

Uh, ya ain't gonna pull some stupid shit like that, are ya?

(He clicks the tip of one of the swords on top of DR MOREAU'S solidified head)

CHERRY KILLS

(picks up one of her cigarettes from the floor, dusts it off, and puts it behind her ear)

We haven't even had a look at the dessert menu.

(Brenda returns to LILITH'S side. The number of strange occurrences has blown past the point of her being surprised)

(LILITH HART stirs and, after a few moments, opens her eyes.

She appears disoriented and confused, but, when her gaze focuses on the ceiling and the malevolent beings still present in the room, her expression changes to horror.)

CPT ELSON

*(during the kerfuffle, he was knocked backwards from his chair, and his leg came out from the peg. He spies the last of the six vials on the floor, and grabs it. Then he crawls to the corner of the room, and slowly lifts himself up. He takes the vial, and coughs violently, trying to stay balanced up against the wall. When he looks up again, his good eye is bright yellow)*

Is this what ye been fightin' all this time? Shoutin' and haranguin' these shadows and miscreants?

*(A large black shadowy ghost notices CPT ELSON and confronts him)*

LEVIATHAN

(to CPT ELSON, in a low ghostly voice)

DEEP CALLS TO DEEP, CAPTAIN

CPT ELSON

(to GASCOIGNE)

Er, did ye say ye were killin' these ghosts? How exactly ye be doin' that?

LEVIATHAN

*(to CPT ELSON)*

We know the secrets in the sea

What's buried in the deep

The secrets open with the key

the dead will cease to keep

CPT ELSON

*(to LEVIATHAN)*

Get back ye devil! Ye speakin' lies-ye tormentin' me mind!

*(the black shadow corners CPT ELSON and tries to surround him)*

LEVIATHAN

we are the speaker for the dead

the legion lost to water

we are the secret that you dread

the trial you wouldn't bother

CPT ELSON

*(nervous laughter)*

Speak no more, ye spirit, ye have the wrong man—I don't know of what you speak! Go bother one of them others!

LEVIATHAN

*(surrounding CPT ELSON more completely)*

We are the voice for first mate Quirrel

whose catch you killed to take

We are the voice of Sailor Skidd

Whom you killed before he wake

CPT ELSON

*(angry now)*

Be gone with ye! End yer torment!

*(to the room)*

Don't be listenin' to this fell spirit now, ye hear?

LEVIATHAN

We speak for the treasure black

you dropped before the strait

you wished to one day come back

to delay your sorry fate

CPT ELSON

*(shouts angrily)*

ALRIGHT I DID IT. I'M SORRY. I killed those men! I sank the curs-ed treasure! For this and many more—I did it!

GASCOIGNE

(Has been watching the large mass surround CPT ELSON and realizes this is not a battle for him to fight. He tosses one of the blessed swords near him and it clatters to the ground)  
Sounds like ya know your way around a blade. Defend yourself, ya old fool!

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(Mouth drops open in horror and anticipation)

CPT ELSON

Bless ye!

*(throws himself on the ground, to retrieve the sword, fumbling it in shaking hands)*

LEVIATHAN

we are the speaker for the dead  
whom you condemned to water  
we are the judge and justice's head  
A trial we won't bother  
*(ghostly black tendrils reach out and grab CPT ELSON by his leg)*

CPT ELSON

Ye won't be takin' me other leg!

*(he swings the sword towards the black, which recoils—and he finds he has slashed his own calf—CPT ELSON howls in pain and drops the sword)*

LEVIATHAN

Deep Calls To Deep, Captain

*(CPT ELSON screams as the black cloud envelops him, and then is silent. When the ghostly cloud dissipates, only his glass eye and captain's hat remain where he lay on the floor, next to the blessed sword)*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(Leaving LILITH'S side, she walks across the room and bends down next to CPT ELSON'S hat. Wipes a tear from her eye.)* You will certainly be missed at dessert. Goodbye, Captain. *(She picks up*

*his eyeball, rubs it off on her dress, and returns to kneel next to LILITH, eye in hand.)*

GASCOIGNE

*(He lumbers over to where CPT ELSON was taken, kneels and picks up the sword, glancing at the captain's hat. For a moment, guilt begins to build for not aiding the old man more, but it vanishes.)*

Be seein' ya, Captain.

LILITH HART

*(Her left arm is clearly broken, and as she gingerly reaches down toward her boot with her right hand, it seems likely that she has several cracked ribs as well. She pulls a shining black dagger from her boot and holds it out toward GASCOIGNE.)*

I'll take some of that holy water now.

GASCOIGNE

*(He takes the blade from LILITH before speaking to her)*  
Gascoigne ain't got it in him to bless another blade.  
*(reaches into his trench coat and grabs another nameless bottle. He dabs some of the liquid onto the blade and rubs it in)*  
Gascoigne anointed your blade with frostbitten wormwood oil, it should work to keep any spirits at bay, but it won't kill 'em.  
*(He hands the blade back to LILITH)*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(To LILITH)*

You don't look like you're in any shape to fight, my dear. Lie still and be thankful you are alive! *(Glances over to DR. MOREAU-WEBB encased in a black shell)* I do hope he doesn't get eaten by that black shell like the Captain was eaten by a black cloud.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

*(to EVANDER)*

Gods, why are you so weaselly? Just stop moving! It was easier to battle that damn ghost than it is to take care of you.

*(STEN loses his hold on EVANDER, allowing him to gain some ground)*

*(to ALL)*



Someone stop him!

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

(To STEN)

Stop your catfighting, son. Not a single person in this room including EVANDER thinks he is in danger from you right now. Get your head on straight and let's make sure we're out of trouble. Have you noticed that the CAPTAIN is gone? *(Glass eye in hand, she points to CPT ELSON'S captain's hat.)*

DR MOREAU-WEBB

*(A loud crack echoes around the room. The black shell encasing the doctor splits and falls into two pieces. The doctor stands. He is transformed, wearing a flowing black robe with a hood. From under the hood projects a long, white beak. His hands are covered with what appear to be leather gauntlets. He raises them to eye level, turning them back and forth.)*

Ah, a protective carapace. Thank you, my friend. This is sound proof against the pestilence.

*(He looks around the room. His face under the hood appears to be covered by the white bird-mask of a mediaeval doctor. He looks briefly at the mass of roiling spirits, then at GASCOIGNE.)*

Enhanced sight, too. I was wrong before, Monsieur, I see no trace of the Pestilence within you. It has been here though.

*(He walks to the CAPTAIN ELSON'S hat. His height has noticeably increased, he looks close to 2 meters tall when upright.)*

Yes, it was borne by the Captain. I could not before see the traces, but they appear so clear now. Yet the Captain has gone, so I must follow.

*(He looks around the room, briefly meeting the gaze of all present.)*

I am happy to pronounce each of you free of the Pestilence. However, this is not a suitable place for me to conduct my research. I require scientific facilities, and I must follow the spoor of my enemy.

*(He takes a step forward. Something about the angle of his movement seems wrong, as though he is walking away from everything at the same time. He takes another step and vanishes, leaving no trace. DR CLAUDE MOREAU-WEBB, now the PLAGUE DOCTOR, has left the party).*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

He got himself eaten up after all.

GASCOIGNE

(He watches PLAGUE DOCTOR disappear, not even a bit of surprise on his face)

Guess doc was an alien, who'da thought.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

I suppose PLAGUE DOCTOR couldn't be bothered to wrap up LILITH'S leg before he entered another dimension. But at least he gave us all a no charge Pestilence-free diagnosis.

(To STEN) Have you noticed that PLAGUE DOCTOR is gone, too? By the time you're done lollygagging we'll all be gone!

(To Self)

But hopefully not before dessert.

LILITH HART

I'd better get dessert, after all this. Not that I can destroy any of these ghost things with my oh-so-useful-keep-them-at-bay dagger.

*(LILITH shoots a salty glance at GASCOIGNE.)*

Although, as I assume you're the reason my ghosts are no longer present, I suppose I should thank you.

*(Looks over at STEN struggling with Evander.)*

Perhaps I could scoot my way across the floor and stab the strange-looking elf-man?

*(Grunting in pain, LILITH starts to slide across the floor.)*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

*(Chucks CPT ELSON'S glass eye at STEN'S head)* The best way I can honor the dead is to honor the host who helped us find peace with our ghosts!

*(Angrily, she looks for CPT ELSON'S peg leg. She finds it and lifts it up like a club. To EVANDER)* I will defend you from these two misled youth. All I ask in return is to finish the meal I started!

LILITH HART

*(Still struggling to crawl across the floor toward STEN and EVANDER)*

I'm so happy you found peace with your ghost, BRENDA, but, in case you've forgotten, mine tried to incinerate and mangle me.

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

Finding peace looks different for each of us. It is not EVANDER'S fault that the spirit world called us to a dinner of judgment.

LILITH HART

It's EVANDER's fault for enabling murderous ghosts!

*(Still on the floor, LILITH raises her hand with the dagger, only to nearly drop it and end up weakly poking EVANDER with it.)*

BRENDA SCHTILSHPANK:

Who's murderous now?

*(Glances disapprovingly at STEN's cutlery and LILITH's dagger, then glances uncomfortably at the peg-leg club she is holding in the air. She lowers it, slightly)*

*(Moments after LILITH pokes EVANDER with a dagger, one of the ghosts, a pulsing dark Mass like a plume of smoke, plummets toward her, knocking the dagger from her hand with a screech. It turns toward the group, preparing to swoop at them again.)*

*(BRENDA ducks and cowers, now holding up the peg-leg as a shield)*

GASCOIGNE [to be deleted]

*(Breaks 4th wall, knocks on everyones screens)*

Ya ain't gonna just leave it here, are ya?

BRENDA [to be deleted]

That's the end, honey, didn't you know?

## THE END

BRENDA[to be deleted]

Nevermind! I texted the captain, he is on his way. Give him some grace. He's a bit old and hobble-legged. He can barely keep up when the action is hot.

[to be deleted]

CPT ELSON enters while credits are rolling

"Well, good job everyone, cheers"

BRENDA - to be deleted

Now go slay some ghost squid! 🦑

LILITH HART'S STUNT DOUBLE [to be deleted]

*(Rolls to her side, stands up, and grabs the nearest drink from the table. She knocks it back.)*

I need a raise for dealing with these shenanigans.

GASCOIGNE [to be deleted]

(Visibly frustrated)

How disappointin'. Not a single death.

(Looks over at EVANDER pinned on the ground by STEN. Lazily chucks sword into EVANDERS chest)

Now Gascoigne feels a bit better.

(EVANDER'S ghost appears)

BRENDA (to be deleted)

Finally, this is the ending I've been waiting for!

(to be deleted)

CPT ELSON has met his untimely demise, RIP

CHERRY KILLS (to be deleted)

(to ~~SCARECROW~~ PIGEON)

I'm going to miss you most of all.

STEN "SHOOTER" SALINGTON

(squinting at the space that GASCOIGNE knocked on, confused)  
What the hell are you all doing? Damn, is that vial really  
making you all insane?

(astonishment continues as he sees LILITH rise, unharmed, and  
CPT ELSON addressing the credits. He can't possibly understand)  
Don't tell me I'm the last sensible one...

BRENDA [To be deleted]

Yes, STEN. You are the last sane one. That's why this is in the  
horror genre.

DR MOREAU-WEBB (TRANSFORMED) [to be deleted]

*(A beak taps on the screen. Behind the glass sits the PLAGUE  
DOCTOR, its finger hovering over the DELETE button on a  
keyboard)*

Pestilence? Are you in there?

<None of this is being deleted, it's too good>