

The Serpent Returns

A full-length play

By Evan Spreen

Contact:
Evan Spreen
409 12th St NW
Albuquerque, NM 87102
682 256 8230
Espreen@gmail.com

Synopsis: *The Serpent Returns* is a dark supernatural comedy in two acts. After forty years, Henry is revisited by his first wife: Christine, who hasn't aged a day. During her long absence, Henry had all but forgotten her. He wed a lawyer named Mason after coming out as gay. However, Christine and her servant Ava claim that this marriage is invalid and threaten to murder Mason by midnight if Henry does not honor his original vows. Henry and Mason struggle to find a way to subvert this dark scheme while trying to keep their neighbors safe as well.

Influence: This play, a comedy at heart, draws its themes from rich Japanese and Chinese folklore. It weaves a tale of a serpent in the form of a woman, inspired by stories such as “*How a Monk of the Dojoji in the Province of Kii copied the Lotus Sutra and brought Salvation to the Serpents*” from the *Konjaku Monogatari* and “*A Serpent's Lust*” From *Tales of Moonlight and Rain* by Ueda Akinari, offering a unique blend of supernatural and cultural elements in the guise of farcical parlor comedy.

Author Bio: Evan Spreen is a playwright based in Albuquerque and Los Angeles. His work has been performed in the US, Europe, Japan, and Australia. Recently, his play *Amelia?* was part of PEP Productions Best of 2020 festival in Orange County, NY. His one-act *Lost Oceans* was selected as Best of Festival at Know Theater's 2022 festival in Binghamton, NY. His horror play *The Vast and Unknowable Oven* was performed at Kent School in Connecticut in 2023. In New Mexico, his play *Decision Makers* was part of the New Mexico Seven 2023 at the Fusion Theater company. He enjoys writing Sci-fi/Horror the most. Probing the uncanny depths of alternate dimensions and strange worlds one play at a time. Evan is a proud member of Dramatists Guild of America.

Character Breakdown:

4M 4F

Henry: M 60's-70's Curator of an art gallery. An attractive older man.**Mason:** M 50's A lawyer. Easily startled. Often flabbergasted.**Christine:** F 20's-30's A serpent in the form of a woman. Sensual. Empowered.**Ava:** F 20's-30's Attendant to Christine. Also a serpent in human form.**Estelle:** F 50's-90's Downstairs neighbor. Distracted but never bored. Think Liza.**Caleb:** M 20's-30's Landlord's son. Amicable. Clueless.**Melchior:** M 30's-50's A monster hunter from the noble family Vedrovich.**Bikini Werewolf:** F or M Cameo role. Looks like the old Universal Wolfman in a bikini.

A Note on diversity: Although the characters of Christine and Ava both inspired by Japanese mythology, they are both shapeshifting serpents in human form. Therefore they can be played by absolutely anyone regardless of ethnicity. The rest of the cast is also completely open in regards to ethnicity.

ACT ONE

Lights up dimly on the living room of an upscale apartment.

FX - A storm. Rain on a windowpane.

We see the slender shape of CHRISTINE reclining on the sofa. She wears a long and provocative lounge dress. She slowly stands and walks slowly around the room, taking it all in.

HENRY, an older man wearing a bathrobe, enters. He's coming downstairs for a glass of water. He sees her immediately. They freeze. She smiles.

CHRISTINE

How long has it been, my love?

HENRY

You.

Beat. Neither makes a move. A tense moment until Christine breaks it and moves forward.

CHRISTINE

I hope I didn't startle you.

HENRY

You can't be here.

CHRISTINE

Have a seat.

HENRY

This is impossible.

CHRISTINE

Please, darling. Sit with me.

HENRY

No. I'm dead. I died.

CHRISTINE

Nothing so morose.

HENRY

My body is upstairs. In bed. My heart stopped beating three minutes ago.

CHRISTINE

Don't be melodramatic. It's only me. I've come home to you at last.

She moves toward him. He stumbles away in terror.

HENRY

Mason. Where's Mason? I have to tell him I'm dead.

CHRISTINE

You're alive and well, darling. Let me touch you. Oh, how I've missed your touch.

She goes to kiss him. He yells and falls to the ground with a thump. He clutches his chest and remains prone. She makes a move to help him but hears:

MASON (O.S.)

Henry!?

CHRISTINE

And who is that?

HENRY

(moaning)

Mason!

CHRISTINE

I thought we were alone.

MASON (O.S.)

What happened? Did you fall!?

CHRISTINE

You could've told me we had company ...

HENRY

In here, Mason!

MASON enters wearing monogrammed two-piece pajamas. He rushes in and goes straight to Henry without seeing Christine.

MASON

Henry! Why did you get out of bed? Oh, no, no, no. What happened?

Mason finally sees Christine. He screams.

MASON

WHO IS THAT!?

CHRISTINE

(curious)

Who are you?

HENRY

Help.

MASON

Did she hurt you!?

CHRISTINE

I would never.

HENRY

Mason. Listen. I'm already dead.

MASON

You aren't dead. I've got you. Can you stand up?

CHRISTINE

(amused)

Who is this obsequious little man? Your servant?

MASON

Obsequious!? What are you doing in our living room in the middle of the night? You scared him half to death! Henry, can you please explain why there's a prostitute in our living room?

CHRISTINE

A prostitute?? You're an insect!

HENRY

I'm dead. There's no other explanation.

MASON

Should I call the police? I'm calling the police.

CHRISTINE

You will do no such thing.

Mason grabs a lamp off a side table and brandishes it clumsily. Christine coils like a snake about to strike.

MASON

Back! Get back!

CHRISTINE

You're adorable. I'll rip your limbs off one by one.

MASON

She's threatening me, Henry!

CHRISTINE

Do you feel threatened by me, little bug?

HENRY

Stop! Just stop! Both of you!

Henry stands shakily and moves between them.

HENRY

I need to catch my breath. I'll tell you. I'll tell you everything. (beat) Mason, this woman isn't real.

MASON

What?

HENRY

She can't be here. We're having a double death experience.

MASON

That's not even a thing!

HENRY

A shared traumatic loss of life scenario.

MASON
What? Who is she, Henry?

CHRISTINE
His wife.

HENRY
Ex-wife.

CHRISTINE
You may call me Christine.

MASON
(stunned)
Ex-wife? I have shoes older than her.

HENRY
She's the same. She's the same now as she was back then.

MASON
That doesn't make sense.

HENRY
I know it doesn't make sense! Nothing makes any sense!

CHRISTINE
Now that you've made my acquaintance, would you care to properly introduce me to your ...

MASON
Husband.

HENRY
This is Mason. He's my husband.

Beat. Then Christine starts to laugh.

CHRISTINE
No. To him? Really? Oh, Henry. I can't. Have I been gone that long? This funny little man is your husband?

MASON
(offended)
Hey! Who the hell do you think you are? Barging in on us in the middle of the night! I locked the front door Henry, I swear I did.

CHRISTINE

(Still laughing)

Your husband? Oh my. Hold on. This is just too much. (beat) I'm going to kill him now.

MASON

HENRY!!

HENRY

Calm down! Everybody! There's no killing in the living room. That's a rule we live by. Mason. This is Christine. We were married on...

CHRISTINE

October 16th, 1981.

HENRY

Yes. I think that's right. We were married for four? No, five years.

CHRISTINE

Six.

HENRY

Why can't I remember?

MASON

How could you forget? Even if that's true, you can't convince me this woman was even born before 1981.

CHRISTINE

(factual tone)

He's circumcised. A scar runs down his lower back in a shape that resembles a question mark. He has a birthmark on his left--

MASON

You slept with her!? Oh god. You cheated on me?? With her?

HENRY

I didn't cheat.

MASON

When!? When did it happen?

HENRY

It was long before you and I met.

MASON

This is a sick joke. I want her out of my house! I'm calling the police.

Mason makes to exit. He is blocked by the sudden entrance of AVA, a young woman in a dark robe. Mason screams.

MASON

Ah! Another one! Did you sleep with her too?

HENRY

No. I didn't.

CHRISTINE

This is my attendant. You may call her Ava.

MASON

Attendant?

CHRISTINE

She attends to my needs.

MASON

Well, she can attend you straight out the front door.

CHRISTINE

We will not be leaving. Not without my husband.

HENRY

It's alright. They can't hurt me. They wouldn't. I remember that much.

MASON

I'm not worried about you right now. This one looks like she's going to bite me.

CHRISTINE

She only bites when I tell her to.

HENRY

They both look exactly the same.

MASON

That's ridiculous.

HENRY

I wouldn't believe it either, but here they are right in front of me.

MASON

Okay, okay. Hold on. Let me wrap my brain around your justification for this home invasion. Cruella over there is your ex-wife. And Wednesday Addams here is her “attendant”. And they both look exactly the same as they did back in our year of the lord 1981.

HENRY

Yes.

MASON

Which makes them both sixty years old.

HENRY

Yes.

MASON

Henry, these women are not sixty years old!

AVA

You are correct. We are far older than that.

MASON

Oh my god. She talks.

HENRY

Mason, come here.

MASON

How many wives should I be expecting? Just a general estimate ...

HENRY

I know this seems impossible. And that’s because it is. But some distant part of me remembers these women. Both of them. Just let *me* talk to them. I’ll sort this out.

MASON

Have you lost your mind?

CHRISTINE

He may stay. This concerns him too. Ava, if you please.

AVA

My mistress has returned bearing a claim. Upon the discovery of a previously unknown partnership, we now put forth that your marriage to this man is invalid.

MASON
(scoffs)

This isn't Florida.

AVA

Any union forged between these men was constructed under false pretenses and is hereby forfeit. Therefore, Henry Joseph Keller will abscond with us from this residence immediately with the intent to reforge bonds of the original union. He may leave all of his earthly affairs in the hands of the unlawful spouse. If these terms are not met by--

CHRISTINE

Midnight.

AVA

By midnight this evening, the union will be terminated by force.

MASON

What does that mean?

AVA

A second will be appointed by the lawful spouse.

CHRISTINE

Put plainly - She will kill you at midnight if Henry doesn't leave with me: His wife. You are, of course, welcome to defend yourself in any manner you choose.

MASON

That's a duel. You're describing a duel.

CHRISTINE

A duel? Very well. The duel shall commence at midnight.

MASON

This is a joke. This is all one big joke! Dissolution by duel? What kind of colonial nonsense is this?

CHRISTINE

Exciting, isn't it?

HENRY

My refusal is my own to give. And here it is: I refuse. I'm not going anywhere with you. You'll leave my home right this minute and make no more threats toward my husband. He has absolutely nothing to do with this.

AVA

Your previous nuptials remain undissolved. As a result, he is not and has never been 'your husband'. Your original vows must be honored.

HENRY

I have the right to refuse.

AVA

You do not. You belong to my mistress.

HENRY

I am no ones property!

AVA

Your rights in this situation are limited according to the terms agreed to and set into action on--

MASON

Honey, I'm a lawyer. Try breaking and entering! Criminal threats! I demand to see proof of these outrageous claims!

Ava produces a large and ornate book seemingly from nowhere and slams it on the coffee table.

MASON

What the hell is that?

AVA

Proof. The Hebinohon.

MASON

The heebadeewhatnow? Where did that even come from?

AVA

You'll find all the pertinent information within.

MASON

I don't need to consult a horror movie prop. I know marriage law. If she left him then Henry had a right to remarry.

CHRISTINE

A marriage to one of us ... is different.

AVA

Henry agreed to the terms as they were presented. We are simply enforcing what his marriage guarantees.

MASON

Under whose authority?

HENRY

Mason, listen. We'll figure this out. If we're calm, we can beat them at their own game.

MASON

What else can we do besides calling the police?

HENRY

We'll try to reason with them. I'll talk to her. What time is it?

MASON

Fifteen to ten.

HENRY

That gives us over two hours. We can figure this out.

MASON

That's easy for you to say. I'm the one they're threatening to murder.

HENRY

We'll take control of the situation. The more we panic, the more dangerous this all becomes, you understand?

MASON

Oh, I understand. (whispers) You distract them. I'll call 911. I love you. I'll be right back.

Mason exits with all the grace of a malfunctioning robot. Christine nods in his direction and Ava slinks off after him. Beat. Henry and Christine are alone. They stand frozen. Christine breaks it and beckons him to the sofa. They sit.

FX: Thunder, lightning.

CHRISTINE

I don't blame you. You needed companionship. You needed warmth. He provided that. After all, I left without even a goodbye. I know how hard that must've been. I want to make up for that. But you have to let me back in.

She touches his knee. He flinches away.

CHRISTINE

Let me touch you.

HENRY

You may not. I'm married.

CHRISTINE

To me. Your wife.

HENRY

I know there was a reason. There must've been a damn good reason I left you.

CHRISTINE

I was sent away. But not by you. The memories will come back to you. Scenes plucked from the shadows beneath your eyelids. Folds in fabric spread out before you. Let my body smooth them out. Your hands frame me. A bead of sweat runs down your arm. My hair lays tangled beneath me. My neck arches back. Your lips meet me there. Breath quickens. Short gasps. Can you see me?

HENRY

Yes. I can see you.

CHRISTINE

It will be disorienting as the memories begin to resurface.

HENRY

How is this possible?

CHRISTINE

Feel my hair brush your forehead.

HENRY

Yes.

CHRISTINE

Feel my ribs beneath your fingertips.

HENRY

Yes.

CHRISTINE

Feel my lips against your own.

HENRY

Yes. How could I ever forget you?

Begin Shadow puppet sequence #1. The lights dim and the story unfolds on the wall behind them. A piano sting marks this change.

CHRISTINE

Ah, if I hadn't walked through your door this evening, why you may have never thought of me again. Let me tell you a story, my love:

Long, long ago in the Province of Kii. In the Cape of Miwa.

I stand on a windswept beach. Dark storm clouds gather on the horizon. After descending from the towering peaks of Tokoyo, the illustrious kingdom of the gods I left behind, this world seems so strange to me.

The wind buffets my hair about my face. The salt burns my nose as I breathe. Ava stands faithful and obedient at my side. But, I'm ready to drift away. To end this life. Fall into the sea's embrace and simply become one with the tide.

Then I hear a voice. Someone cries out. It's you. Your name is Toyo. The son of a fisherman. You are barely twenty years old. Your hair is jet black. Your eyes, deep brown. Concern is written on your face as you approach.

You drag me from the shore and bring me to your home. Nothing but a humble shack. You restore me then. We laugh together. We drink together. I've never met one such as you. A head full of such vibrant dreams. I had grown so sick of the gods in their endless cycles of narcissism and stagnation. They turned their backs on you. I chose not to.

We make the vow then. The vow of 1,000 years. Greater than the mountains or the sea. You hold me in your arms. I whisper that I'll always find you. No matter how many years pass us by. Wherever your soul may go.

I uncoil before you. And I do something I never thought I would, I become your wife, for the first time. But not the last.

There are those who think this union unholy. Those who think me a violent and lustful creature of sin. The monks of the Dojoji temple find us. They rip me from your arms. They trap Ava and myself under the great bell of their monastery. I plead with them. But they will not hear me. They beat on the bell so furiously that it begins to glow with heat. They burn us from the face of this earth.

Then I return to you, time and time again. For over 900 years. In the end, I married you as you are now. As Henry. But they tore me from you once more, so soon after I found you. Your memories went with me.

But now, we are together. And soon you will remember it all and then we shall renew our vows. Another 1,000 years, darling.



End shadow puppet sequence #1. Lights to normal.

HENRY
(recognition)

Christine. I don't believe it.

CHRISTINE

There he is. My Toyo.

HENRY

I remember. I remember our wedding.

CHRISTINE

It was magnificent. I'm lucky to have had so many with you.

HENRY

Time has passed. I'm no longer the man I was.

CHRISTINE

You are the same. You will always be the same to me.

HENRY

Where have you been?

CHRISTINE

I have been torn from you too many times to count.

Mason enters carrying two tea mugs. Mason has changed out of pajamas into something more presentable. Henry moves away from Christine.

MASON

I can't get a signal and the wifi is down too. Is it the storm? Or did our lovely houseguests snip our cables? Hmmm? Speaking of lovely houseguests, has the ghost of Christmas past arrived yet? Did Frankenstein's monster RSVP? Here's your tea, Henry. Oh shoot, I forgot the honey.

He turns to exit and is startled that Ava is directly behind him. He screams.

MASON

Ahh! Will you stop that! You're going to give me a heart attack! Make yourself useful and go get the honey.

Ava looks to Christine. Christine nods. Ava exits. Mason sits on the couch next to Henry.

MASON

I tried to slip out one of the windows, but--

Mason stops and stares at Christine.

MASON

A sidebar if you please, madam.

Christine rolls her eyes and stands. She crosses away from them.

MASON

I tried to sneak out but I was afraid I'd slip clean off the fire escape. I couldn't see anyone on the street or I would've flagged them down. The party city witch keeps tailing me. Do you think we could tap out Morse code on the floor. Would Estelle hear that?

HENRY

I don't think Estelle knows Morse code.

Ava enters and hands Mason a plastic teddy bear honey container.

MASON

Thank you. Now go stand over there.

Ava goes to lurk by Christine.

HENRY

Should we offer them something to drink?

MASON

No!

HENRY

They are still our guests regardless of circumstance.

MASON

They mean to kill me ...

HENRY

Ladies, a beverage?

CHRISTINE

You know what I like. The same for Ava.

Henry nods and exits. Mason makes his way to the coffee table to study the book and sips his tea.

MASON

Lovely. Just lovely. The last time we had a burglar I offered him a pedicure while he was making off with our TV.

AVA

We do not seek to remove your electronics or require the decoration of our feet.

MASON

Well, shoot, we could've turned this into a real ladies' night. Have a pillow fight. Turn on Mama Mia. (beat) Alright. Let's see here. So you're claiming that this book provides legal evidence to your claim while simultaneously rewriting the whole of modern American law to make a gentleman's duel the correct judiciary process.

AVA

We answer to a higher power.

MASON

Honey, you just let me know what the judge says when you tell him that.

CHRISTINE

This isn't personal. You simply stand in the way of something far greater than you can comprehend.

AVA

So, we must kill you.

CHRISTINE

I'll be honest. I'm glad you were there for him. But now you are no longer needed.

AVA

So, we must kill you.

CHRISTINE

If you left by your own means it would spare you a terrible death. Yet, you remain.

AVA

So, we must--

MASON

Golly gee. Are you guys gonna kill me? Jeepers ... I'm not engaging with this anymore.

Mason reads the book on the coffee table. Henry enters with a bottle of red wine and two glasses. He's actually enjoying this a little. He pours the ladies wine.

MASON

(under his breath)

And out comes the wine.

CHRISTINE

Thank you, darling.

HENRY

And a little for you too.

AVA

You are too kind.

HENRY

There we are. Now, shall I bring out some cheese?

MASON

Henry! Stop being nice to the murder ladies. I'm over here trying to find out if there's some way out of this in the Necronomicon. But the first part's written in Japanese and the bits that are in English are in a swoopy cursive I can barely read. This isn't even about any form of marriage. Any judge would take one look at this book and throw it out. Half of this is just whimsical witchcraft nonsense. Oh, wait. No, this part is actually about marriage surprisingly. The Sleepy Hollow proclamation: "If either spouse should be decapitated by scythe, guillotine, or errant carriage wheel; then the marriage shall continue with the head and never the body."

AVA

Try the next page.

MASON

Okay, okay. There's a picture of a little man reciting wedding vows to what looks like a mermaid. "According to the twilight council edict of November 23rd 1841. A union with any creatures beyond the scope of mankind will henceforth take precedence over that of the mortal equivalent. Except in the case of Kobolds, rock trolls, and any species of lesser owlbear."

AVA

Will that be proof enough?

MASON

Henry, did you get married during a game of Dungeons and Dragons?

A knock at the door.

ESTELLE (O.S.)

Boys? Is your internet down?

MASON

Oh, Thank god. It's Estelle.

ESTELLE
 What? I can't hear you.

HENRY
 Now isn't a good time, Estelle!

ESTELLE
 May I come in?

A beat of consideration. Henry shakes his head 'no'. Mason goes for it anyway. He rushes forward and throws open the door with relief. ESTELLE, a woman wearing a nightgown and slippers stands before him.

ESTELLE
 Hello.

MASON
 Hi Estelle!

ESTELLE
 Are you having a party?

MASON
 Yes! Yes we're having a party. These are ... These are ... Students! Students interning at Henry's gallery.

ESTELLE
 Goodness. I feel so underdressed. Aren't you two just gorgeous! Maybe I should go. I'm certainly not very fancy at the moment.

MASON
 Nonsense! Come on in!

ESTELLE
 I was just about to get into bed. Oh, wait. Henry's in his pajamas too. I guess I'm okay. Hi. I'm Estelle. I live downstairs. Ohhhhhh, are you having wine?

MASON
 Yes. Would you like some?

ESTELLE
 Oh no, I shouldn't. Look at me barging in on your little soiree.

HENRY

You're right. Perhaps now isn't the best time.

MASON

Sure it is! Wine for everybody! The night's still young!

ESTELLE

Oh, I really shouldn't.

MASON

Have a seat! I insist!

ESTELLE

Ok.

Estelle sits on sofa.

MASON

Henry, be a dear and get another glass from the kitchen.

Henry grimaces and exits.

ESTELLE

You two are interns at Henry's Gallery? Are you models, too? You both look like models. Something out of a magazine. Do you ever model for paintings? I asked Henry once if I could model for him sometime and he said he's not even a painter. Then I said "You aren't a painter!?! You own an art gallery and you don't even paint??" So I put my clothes back on and I stormed out! Oh, I'm just joking. Henry's gay. I've checked. That's his husband right there.

Henry returns and hands Estelle a glass.

ESTELLE

(pouring herself a LARGE glass)

Oh, I really shouldn't though.

MASON

So the internet's down for the whole building, huh? Phones aren't working either.

ESTELLE

Want me to call the phone company?

MASON

We can't call them if the phones aren't working.

ESTELLE

Well isn't that frustrating. I bet they do it like that on purpose. At least we can get to know each other a little better in the meantime. (To Ava) Come have a seat next to me. What was your name again?

AVA

Ava.

ESTELLE

Avaaaa. That's a lovely name. Avvvvaaa. Tell me about your favorite artists, avaaa.

Beat. Henry pulls Mason aside while Estelle continues to talk to Ava.

HENRY

(To Mason)

We have to get her out of here.

MASON

She's fine. I think she actually likes them.

HENRY

(To Mason)

I will not be held responsible for this. You know they're dangerous.

MASON

You were the one who offered them wine.

HENRY

This won't end well and you know it.

MASON

It's already going to end with my murder! You seemed fine with that, but now all of a sudden Estelle is the priority!

HENRY

You aren't in any immediate danger. We have time. But we can't be sure what they'll do to her.

ESTELLE

Henry, you should bring out some cheese.

HENRY

I tried. Mason said no.

MASON

I just don't think it's a cheese kind of night, Estelle.

ESTELLE

Well of course it is! What's today? Wednesday?

MASON

Tuesday.

Estelle has opened the book on the coffee table.

ESTELLE

What's this big old dusty book all about?

MASON

I brought some work home.

ESTELLE

Is it a book of spells?

MASON

No.

ESTELLE

Did you leave Mickey Mouse in charge of the wizard tower? Because he's gonna flood the place with his wacky broomsticks.

MASON

What?

ESTELLE

Haven't you seen Fantasia? That's from Fantasia.

MASON

Yes. We've all seen Fantasia.

ESTELLE

(To Ava)

Have you seen Fantasia?

AVA

No.

ESTELLE

She hasn't seen Fantasia.

MASON

Okay ...

ESTELLE

Can you go see if you can find Fantasia on DVD?

MASON

I don't think we have Fantasia on DVD.

ESTELLE

Did you look?

MASON

No, I haven't looked. But I'm sure we don't have it.

ESTELLE

We all want to watch Fantasia.

MASON

I know, but we don't have it.

ESTELLE

But you haven't looked.

MASON

No!

ESTELLE

Maybe you could go look.

MASON

I know we don't have it.

ESTELLE

Do you though?

MASON

We don't. Have it.

Beat. Estelle gives him a look that implies 'you might have it though'

MASON

(losing temper)

FINE ESTELLE! FINE! I will go look and see if we have Fantasia on DVD. Even though I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we do not have Fantasia on DVD, VHS, Or BLUERAY!

Mason exits. Ava follows him off. Estelle continues to flip through spooky coffee table book. Henry refills his tea mug with red wine. Christine crosses to him.

CHRISTINE

Isn't she fun?

HENRY

I don't like that look in your eye.

CHRISTINE

(coy)

Oh, I don't know what you mean, darling.

HENRY

I know that look.

CHRISTINE

What look?

HENRY

You're hungry.

CHRISTINE

I did skip lunch.

HENRY

I offered you cheese.

CHRISTINE

I cannot be sated by stale milk. I require something a little richer.

ESTELLE

(from sofa)

I love Little Richard.

HENRY

You will not harm anyone under my roof.

ESTELLE

Did he do the song 'Chantilly Lace'?

HENRY

I'm starting to remember things. Troubling things about you.

CHRISTINE

Oh?

HENRY

I remember, you had an appetite.

CHRISTINE

You didn't seem to mind back then. In fact, you encouraged it.

HENRY

I would never!

CHRISTINE

Oh, but you did. You used to go to great lengths to feed me.

HENRY

That's horrible.

CHRISTINE

We're just getting started.

HENRY

I don't want to get started with anything! You have no right to show up after all this time and upend my entire life!

CHRISTINE

Your have always belonged to me. Even when you forget it.

HENRY

I'm not the man I was. If you wanted that man then you shouldn't have left him behind.

CHRISTINE

(hurt)

I did not leave you. I told you that. You should know that I would never willingly leave your side. There are those who still despise me for what I am. Those who will never understand my love for you. They have pursued us through the ages. Is it such a crime to want to be loved? Am I not deserving of that? I only want eternity with you.

HENRY

Eternity is a little open-ended. How much time would we even have left together?

CHRISTINE

We will make the vow again. I will spend the next thousand years at your side.

HENRY

But I like my life. I like it just the way it is.

CHRISTINE

Your memories will return.

HENRY

Regardless of my memory, I want you to--

A loud snore from the couch. Estelle is asleep.
Henry crosses and removes the wine glass from
her hand. Christine crosses opposite.

CHRISTINE

It would be a mercy.

HENRY

No.

CHRISTINE

She wouldn't feel a thing.

HENRY

Stop it!

CHRISTINE

It is only natural.

HENRY

I won't let you eat her!

Mason enters holding the special 60th
anniversary edition of Fantasia on DVD. Ava
enters right behind him.

MASON

Who's eating who?

AVA

Ah, yes.

MASON

I leave for two seconds and now we're about to eat Estelle?

AVA

It is only natural.

Ava and Christine prepare to strike at Estelle from opposite sides. Henry climbs on top of Estelle and stretches his arms out in defense. Estelle continues to sleep completely unbothered by this.

HENRY

You won't touch her!

MASON

We have other neighbors you can eat!

AVA

We must feed.

HENRY

(losing temper)

No!! I've just about had it! No one is eating anyone! You have no right to come into our home and behave like animals. I've been too kind! I offered you wine and hospitality. All I asked in return was that you don't kill anyone! Now all of you sit down! You too Mason!

MASON

I wasn't gonna eat her!

HENRY

Sit.

Everyone sits uncomfortably on the sofa. Henry staggers a bit from the exertion. His hand is pressed hard to his chest.

MASON

Are you okay?

HENRY

Yes. I'm fine.

MASON

Do you want me to get your pills?

HENRY

No, just give me a second. It'll pass.

Christine stands and places her hand on Henry's heart. He gasps.

HENRY

How did you do that? I can breathe again.

CHRISTINE

Come. I will take away all your pain.

MASON

We've got it covered, thanks.

HENRY

Mason. My chest. It isn't tight. This is incredible.

CHRISTINE

Come, my darling. Let me heal you.

Henry starts to follow her.

MASON

I'm so glad you feel better. But do you have to go upstairs for that? Can't you heal him down here. Without any funny business.

HENRY

There will be no funny business.

MASON

But-- she'll seduce you or something.

HENRY

No one is seducing anyone. You are my husband. I love you dammit. Please don't think I would toss you aside like that. All I know is she touched me and the pain I've lived with for nearly fifteen years has melted away. We will be right back. I promise.

MASON

Okay. Just hurry back. Please ...

Henry exits with Christine. Mason starts to follow but Ava hisses at him. Beat. Ava and Mason stare at each other from opposite ends of the sofa while Estelle snores.

MASON

Do you really eat people?

Ava shrugs.

MASON

What does that mean??

Beat. No reply.

MASON

So after you murder me ... you're going to eat me?

AVA

You will be given a warrior's funeral. We will stuff you down the garbage disposal.

MASON

Wait, are you serious?

AVA

No.

Another long tense beat.

MASON

Are you an alien?

AVA

No.

MASON

Vampire?

AVA

No.

MASON

Ghost?

No. AVA
 Ghoul? MASON
 No. AVA
 Goblin? MASON
 No. AVA
 Come on, give me a hint. MASON
 We are the sovereign sign of the pharaoh. We are the temptation of Adam. We are-- AVA
 A knock at the door. Beat.
 Hey guys! Have you seen Estelle? CALEB (O.S.)
 Ugh. Perfect. That's Caleb. His father owns the building so he thinks he does too. He annoys the crap outta me. I beat him ONE time at scrabble and he's held a grudge ever since. He tried telling me that 'Camraderie' is strictly a French word and shouldn't count ... It's a loan word you baboon! MASON
 So, I can eat this one? AVA
 Beat. Mason considers. Ava takes this as a yes and leaps toward the door.
 Wait! No! You can't eat anyone! MASON
 Ava opens the door. Caleb enters wearing a rain slicker. Ava silently leers at him like he's a chicken dinner.

MASON

Caleb! Hello!

CALEB

Oh, hey there Mason. Didn't realize you had company.

MASON

She's right there.

CALEB

Who?

MASON

Estelle.

CALEB

Oh, is she sleeping?

MASON

Yes. She popped by when the internet went out and you know Estelle, we got talking and Henry opened a bottle of wine and I guess she dozed off for a moment. Caleb, you don't happen to have cell service right now, do you?

CALEB

No, I guess it's the storm. I was at least trying to get the WiFi back up, but I wanted to check on Estelle first. I just worry about her sometimes, ya know? She's like my mom away from mom.

MASON

Is that right? Let me get your raincoat. You're dripping.

CALEB

I don't want to alarm you or anything, but I think we might've had a break in.

MASON

No!

CALEB

The lock on the back door was completely burned off. It was covered in this spicy green goop.

MASON

Spicy?

CALEB

Not like Mexican food spicy. Like acid spicy.

MASON

I've never heard anyone call acid 'spicy'.

CALEB

Are you going to introduce me to your friend?

MASON

Oh! Uhhhh. Yesss. This is Ava. She's an intern at Henry's gallery.

CALEB

Oh, cool. So you like art.

MASON

Yes, Caleb. I might go as far to say that she indeed 'likes art'.

AVA

I like art.

MASON

There you have it! Now is there anything else we can help you with Caleb?

CALEB

What kind of art do you like?

MASON

Nope! No. Do not answer that. You came here to find Estelle. You found her, good job. What else do you need?

CALEB

I mean-- I was just a little worried because, like I said, someone broke into the building with spicy green goop that burned through the lock.

MASON

Acidic green goop.

CALEB

--And that's like some serious CIA, KBG, FBI shit, right? Whoever did this was prepared. I just wanna get to the bottom of this before someone gets pushed out a window.

AVA
I did it.

CALEB
What?

AVA
I was the one who expectorated acid onto the lock.

CALEB
Expectorated?

MASON
Spit. Come on, Caleb. She *spit* acid. The alarming part isn't her word choice, it's the fact that she spit acid!

AVA
Would you like a demonstration?

CALEB
Of what?

AVA
Expectoration.

CALEB
Umm.

Ava spits acid onto Caleb's hand.

CALEB
OW! What the heck! How'd she do that?

MASON
She's lactose intolerant. We gave her a bunch of milk. She just guzzled it. I warned her this would happen.

AVA
How does it feel?

CALEB
Ow! Spicy!

Ava leaps on him. He screams as she bites his neck. He barely escapes her grip and then runs out the door. Ava exits in pursuit. Beat.

MASON

What a strange evening this is turning out to be.

Mason goes to pour himself wine. The bottle is empty.

MASON

Spicy acid. Seriously?

Estelle snores loudly. Caleb's screams are heard offstage.

MASON

Shoot. I have to do something. I'm gonna have to help him. I mean she's not going to hurt me until midnight, but she'll rip him to shreds. He doesn't deserve that simply because his word choice is pseudo-intellectual anti-poetry. He doesn't deserve that simply because he has an alarmingly large collection of stuffed animals. He doesn't deserve that because he always, always tries to inject whatever book he's currently reading into casual conversation and then act like he's the one that wrote the damn book. Yes, Caleb! I read Dune when it came out. I don't want to talk to you about what the spice represents. No, I haven't seen the movie. I heard it was awful. Oh, you mean the new one. No I haven't seen that one either. (beat) Ugh. He's just a kid. Sort of. (beat) I have to do this. I have to. Oh god, Henry is upstairs with that nightmare woman and who knows what they're doing. No! I can't think about that. I have to do something. Right, Estelle?

Beat. Estelle snores. Caleb screams.

MASON

Alright! Alright! I'm coming, Caleb! I'm coming! It wasn't even that much acid!

Mason takes a deep breath and exits. Henry enters a moment later.

HENRY

I remember! I remember everything!

Christine enters behind him and slips her arms around him.

CHRISTINE

Come back to bed.

HENRY

But-- there was someone I needed to tell. Someone. My husband? Is that right?

CHRISTINE

There's only me, darling. Come lay with me.

HENRY

What? Where? Yes. Back to bed. Back to bed.

Henry and Christine exit.

A long beat. Suddenly MELCHIOR, a monster hunter in a leather duster slams through the front door.

MELCHIOR

SHOW YOURSELF SERPENT!

ESTELLE

(waking up)

Hi.

MELCHIOR

Hello.

ESTELLE

Are you here about the WiFi?

MELCHIOR

I think I may have the wrong apartment.

ESTELLE

Ok.

Melchior exits, closing the door behind him.

ESTELLE

Boys? I think we're out of wine. I'll go see if I can find some.

Estelle exits. Stage is empty

BLACKOUT

The song "Chantilly Lace" plays as house lights rise for intermission.

END ACT ONE

To read the rest, please contact the author!

