

Monsters are Made in the Minds of Men

a play by Ryan M. Bultrowicz

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

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MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

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CHARACTERS

Note from the playwright: This is a three-person cast and it's important that it stays that way. The actress who plays Camila must also play Ruby and the actor who plays Liam must also play Dean.

CAMILA./RUBY. – The daughter of Ruby and Dean/The wife of Dean and mother of Camila.

LIAM./DEAN. – Camila's boyfriend/Husband of Ruby and father of Camila.

KIM. – Ruby's sister.

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

A small room. There are boxes of monster-hunting gear and miscellaneous items spread all around. There are books scattered on the floor and desk and there's a large bookcase filled with books and more clutter. CAMILA and LIAM are organizing and sorting through the items.

CAMILA. He was obsessed with the idea that man-eating monsters like wendigos and skunk apes have been hiding in the shadows, silently tormenting the human race for centuries.

LIAM. Skunk apes? One half skunk, one half ape! Can you imagine the smell?

CAMILA. Dad spent a year in the Everglades chasing after that smell.

LIAM. When you told me your dad was into monsters I thought you meant, like, in the movies. The Creature From the Black Lagoon! Nosferatu! The Wolf Man! *(Liam howls.)*

CAMILA. It's much easier to let people think that.

LIAM. He really believed all of this? Like actually?

CAMILA. Yes, he did. Either that or it was way too specific of an excuse to avoid spending time with his family.

LIAM. And what about you? Do you believe in... *(Liam picks up an animal skull from a box and holds it up to Camila's face.)* El Chupacabra! *(Camila takes the skull from him and puts it back in the box.)*

CAMILA. Come on.

LIAM. It's an honest question! There are some monsters that I believe in.

CAMILA. Don't even say that.

LIAM. There are.

CAMILA. What monster do you believe in?

LIAM. ...Student loan debt.

CAMILA. Stop kidding around.

LIAM. I'm not. I have nightmares about student loan debt. They're very spooky.

CAMILA. Liam.

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

LIAM. Alright, alright. I'm just trying to keep things light. You're clearly not in the mood for my charming wit.

CAMILA. All of this is fun and interesting to you – but for me this is all of the stuff that my dad chose to prioritize over me.

LIAM. Okay, you're right. You're right. I apologize. I just had no idea about any of this and I've never seen a... *(Liam is digging around in some sort of toolbox.)* Whatever this is.

CAMILA. It's a vampire hunting kit.

LIAM. This is a vampire hunting kit? Amazing. *(Camila ignores him and continues searching through boxes.)*

LIAM. Um. Are you looking for something specific?

CAMILA. Yes.

LIAM. Can I help?

CAMILA. If you find any of his journals let me know.

LIAM. Oh. Wait. *(Liam looks around for a moment and then finds a shoebox. He hands it to Camila.)* I saw them earlier. There's like four notebooks in there. *(Camila sits down with the shoebox and begins flipping through the notebooks. Liam wanders around the room – touching everything.)*

CAMILA. Ugh.

LIAM. What's wrong?

CAMILA. It's gibberish. It just says "shape". Over and over and over and over. In all these books.

LIAM. Seriously? *(Liam peers over her shoulder at one of the journals.)* Woah. Alright, that's kind of creepy. And meticulous.

CAMILA. It's stupid.

LIAM. What were you hoping to find in there anyway?

CAMILA. Nothing specific. Just something that would...I don't know...make me less angry at him. If such a thing exists.

LIAM. An apology.

CAMILA. I don't know. *(Pause.)* This is really another great example of his priorities. Monster hunting and filling up four journals with just one word. He spent his time doing this. So stupid. He didn't even know my birthday, you know?

LIAM. I'm sure he knew your birthday.

CAMILA. If he did then he just willfully chose to ignore it. Which is even

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

more depressing.

LIAM. ...What was his personality like?

CAMILA. He was awkward. It's like he was always nervous to be talking to us. That's how much we scared him – his family.

LIAM. Maybe he thought, like, what if you guys were shapeshifters?

CAMILA. What?

LIAM. What if he was living with monsters all along? What if you and your mother were the monsters? Like if the real you got replaced one day by this evil shapeshifting demon?

CAMILA. You think I'm a shapeshifting demon, Liam?

LIAM. No. I don't think that. Because I know it would be impossible for a shapeshifting demon...to capture your beauty. They wouldn't be able to get it right, it's too complicated to be as beautiful as you are – it's as simple as that.

CAMILA. Wow. Thank you for that...distinguished compliment.

LIAM. I'm serious though.

CAMILA. About what part of any of that are you serious about?

LIAM. I think, it's feasible, that your father thought you were a monster. A real monster. Not like a bratty, whiny, monster of a child.

CAMILA. Why would he think that?

LIAM. I don't – okay, just think about it. He was clearly insane. Like literally, diagnosably, a lunatic.

CAMILA. We can agree on that.

LIAM. And he was obsessed with monsters, and like you said, the idea of them being all around us. Hidden just out of sight...or...hiding in plain sight.

CAMILA. As shapeshifters.

LIAM. Right. That would explain why he never talked to you or was nervous or scared talking to you. That would explain why he was always focused on all this monster stuff – he was looking for a way to bring you guys back or find out where you went when the evil shapeshifting monster demon things replaced you guys! That would explain why he wrote down the word “shape” over and over again!

CAMILA. Not really. It's just one word. It doesn't make any sense.

LIAM. Yes. This is just one word over and over. Agreed. But I think what he wanted it to be was his notes on how to bring you guys back or

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

whatever! Or his notes on how to defeat the shapeshifters! Either one. But obviously...he had issues.

CAMILA. That's a very creative way to excuse the negligence of my father and instead convert him into the hero of the story.

LIAM. I'm not saying he's the hero. I'm suggesting that maybe there was no hero and there was no villain. There was just a sick man who had a twisted view on reality that tragically ruined his relationships and consequently his life.

CAMILA. Why wouldn't he just have killed us then?

LIAM. ...I don't know. Maybe you can't kill shapeshifters – at least not in a conventional way. You probably have to recite some ancient incantations and sacrifice a goat or something. Maybe it would've been too much to even kill something that resembles your loved ones...I'm glad he didn't kill anyone. *(Pause.)*

CAMILA. ...He didn't always ignore us. There were good moments. Better moments, at least. But they were few and far between.

LIAM. I want to hear one.

CAMILA. What?

LIAM. A good memory.

CAMILA. They're hardly memories. It's different than that. They're just snapshots in my brain – if that makes any sense.

LIAM. I want to hear about the snapshots then. Come on.

CAMILA. Okay. Well. There was this one day...he actually baked us...I think it was an apple pie. I was really little. He danced with my mom. Then I joined them. We spun in circles and my mom fell. A soft fall – and she laughed until she cried. The sun was beaming in through our windows. Yeah.

LIAM. See? That is nice.

CAMILA. It was rare.

LIAM. Well, when our kids ask you about what their grandpa and grandma were like – you can tell them that.

CAMILA. Our kids?

LIAM. One day.

CAMILA. I don't know about that.

LIAM. What? You want kids. We've discussed this.

CAMILA. Okay, first of all – I'm allowed to change my mind about

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

something like that. Second of all, I said I'd be open to having a kid. Not kids.

LIAM. You can't just have one.

CAMILA. Oh?

LIAM. It's like an unspoken rule.

CAMILA. Unspoken because you just made it up?

LIAM. It's a thing. Otherwise you get an only child who's lonely and weird.

CAMILA. Am I lonely and weird then?

LIAM. ...No. No, I didn't mean you. I mean, you're an only child yes - but you have the spirit of someone who had lots of siblings. It's how you turned out so awesome!

CAMILA. Awful save.

LIAM. Kids or no kids. I'm just happy to be with you.

CAMILA. You're nice.

LIAM. I try.

CAMILA. Thank you for trying.

LIAM. Well, being nice is really the least I can do as-

CAMILA. No. Thank you for trying to make me feel better about my father. *(Pause.)* You're right about some of it.

LIAM. I am?

CAMILA. Nobody had any idea what was going on in his head. All my life, I've mostly felt angry at him. But being here, with you, seeing all of this...all of this...I don't know. I'm still angry but I feel sad for him too. Clearly...there was a war going on, A one-sided war inside my father's brain. I think it's time to end it, once and for all.

LIAM. Yeah?

CAMILA. Yeah. We're going to get rid of all of this stuff. We're going to kill these monsters for good. They're never going to hurt anybody ever again.

LIAM. We're getting rid of everything? Even the cool vampire hunting kit?

CAMILA. Especially the vampire hunting kit. *(They smile at each other and start picking up some of the clutter.)*

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

SCENE TWO

Lights up, we're in the same room but it's years in the past – Camila would have been just a little girl around now. All the oddities of the room are notably more organized. DEAN, Camila's father, paces around the room while writing in a notebook. RUBY, Camila's mother, enters. Dean seems a bit uncomfortable from her sudden presence.

DEAN. You came in quietly...

RUBY. Sorry. I- *(Ruby takes a step towards him – he takes a step back.)*

DEAN. Just wait. Stay there for a moment. Let me think. *(Dean stares at her, thoughts racing through his head at a thousand miles an hour.)*

RUBY. Is something the matter? *(Dean puts his notebook down on his desk, then he places another book on top of it.)*

DEAN. After it stopped raining last night, I went outside in the backyard. I thought the noises of the night - calming breeze...I thought it might help me clear my head. Find some focus. That wasn't what I found, though. Was it? *(Dean studies her some more – will she react to this?)*

RUBY. I don't know what you mean.

DEAN. There was an animal out there. I saw it for just a second before it scurried off into the woods. But I saw it.

RUBY. Oh. Alright. I don't mean to bother you...do you want to come downstairs? Camila and I were about to sit down for dinner.

DEAN. What have you done?

RUBY. I made lemon garlic shrimp... *(Dean now speaks with a quiet but frightening intensity.)*

DEAN. What have you done?

RUBY. Dean, you're scaring me. *(Dean see's the fright in her eyes and his composure immediately changes. He approaches and hugs her.)*

DEAN. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I just had to make sure – to check. You understand that.

RUBY. What?

DEAN. I thought you were someone else. What I saw outside...it was a monster.

RUBY. There are no monsters near us. We both know that.

DEAN. There shouldn't be, you're right. *(Dean tenses up and he holds*

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

back tears.) I'm really afraid, Ruby. I think I did something bad.

RUBY. Hey, it's alright. What did you do?

DEAN. I'm worried for you and Camila. I don't want it to get you but...I don't know how to keep it away. All of this. All the books, the tools, the research, and I don't even know how I can protect my family. I can't lose you.

RUBY. Dean. It's me. I'm fine. I'm right here and Camila is downstairs probably sneaking shrimp as we speak.

DEAN. But how can I know? With what I saw – how am I supposed to know? (*Dean begins sorting through his books.*) I need more time. I need to do more research. I'll keep you both safe or I'll die trying. You have my word.

RUBY. What did you see? (*Dean continues searching.*) Dean! Tell me about what you saw. (*Dean slows down.*)

DEAN. It looked like a cat. Normal. Just one tail. You ever see a two-tailed cat, that's a nekomata. They're usually found in the mountains but I was just checking. I'd never seen one before. I still haven't, I guess. This particular cat, though – it was giving off a feeling. (*Dean rubs his temples.*)

RUBY. A feeling?

DEAN. Yes. It's my sixth-sense of sorts. I've told you about it...but it was so much stronger this time. A sweltering intensity. I could tell I was in the proximity of a dreadful creature.

RUBY. It sounds like...this time...it was just a cat.

DEAN. But the feeling I had-

RUBY. You're just stressed is all.

DEAN. I ran back here and started pulling books off the shelf. I found what I saw, Ruby. I knew it was something bad. (*Ruby just listens, worried for him.*)

DEAN. Bakeneko. It was a bakeneko. Which doesn't make any sense. A bakeneko shouldn't be anywhere near here which leads me to one conclusion. I did this. I brought it here. My interest, my studies, all of this has acted like a magnet. It's drawn the attention of this creature and it now wants to hurt me. To hurt you. To hurt Camila. I need to do more research. (*Dean begins pulling books from the shelf.*) I need to know if more are coming and I need to know how to stop them. I was like a child, a stupid child, poking the ant hill with a big stick! I didn't realize the ants, angry as

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

hell, had been climbing up that stick this whole time.

RUBY. You don't have to stop anything, this isn't-

DEAN. What kind of man am I if I can't protect my own family? From these things! These things that I've brought to us – that I've plagued us with! *(Ruby is silent.)* Ruby. I don't mean to act this way. I'm not trying to yell at you or scare you. I just need you to understand the severity of this. Everything is at risk. And if I don't focus and figure out what to do...our lives are forfeit. *(Ruby places a hand on him.)*

RUBY. We're okay.

DEAN. No! We're not! I'm sorry but this is not something we can just forget about and hope it goes away! Look – bakenekos are dangerous and spiteful and clearly my previous escapades have drawn this one's attention.

RUBY. You said you saw a cat-

DEAN. It looks like a cat!

RUBY. Cats also look like cats. And we can, hopefully, agree that cats are more common around here than whatever creature you're claiming it may have been. Right?

DEAN. You don't understand.

RUBY. Then explain it to me.

DEAN. So you can just continue to attempt to deconstruct what I'm saying?

RUBY. No. I...I'm just trying to understand.

DEAN. I saw it. There was a shiver down my spine. Alarms were blaring inside my head. It gave of an aura.

RUBY. These are things you felt...things you may have projected on to a cat.

DEAN. Projected?

RUBY. You're up here...all the time. When you're not up here, you're on a trip somewhere, searching for something. Your...studies revolve around strange, often creepy, creatures. Yes. I think it's possible you projected that idea on to a common stray cat.

DEAN. Ruby-

RUBY. There's nothing wrong with that. It's normal. Hey – it happens to me. If I watch the news all day, which is filled with horrible stories of horrible people doing horrible things to others, then the next time I'm walking alone in a parking lot I get nervous that someone will do

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

something horrible to me. That's completely natural and justified thinking.

DEAN. I want you to understand what we're really dealing with here. Or – potentially dealing with...if that suits you better.

RUBY. Okay.

DEAN. I'm still in the preliminary stages of my investigation, all of this warrants more digging, but I found a legend that concerns me. It was about a bakeneko that grew angry with a family and made them it's targets of torment. A husband and a wife and their young daughter.

RUBY. Alright.

DEAN. To be brief with it – one day the daughter is running and playing around the house when one of the floorboards gives out. And what she finds underneath...are the bones of her mother and her father. Picked clean of any meat. She shrieks in terror and her parents come running – or, what she thought was her parents. Upon seeing that the girl had discovered the bones, the mother and father that stood in front of her transformed back into their cat-like form and slaughtered and ate her. She was living with imposters for years. While her real parents, what was left of them, were collecting dirt beneath the house.

RUBY. That's the story that's got you so worked up?

DEAN. It's a legend. It's true. It happened.

RUBY. Who wrote the story down?

DEAN. Legends are told by word of mouth. Whoever wrote it down wasn't the first to pass on the knowledge.

RUBY. But who was the first?

DEAN. What are you getting at?

RUBY. The whole family died – so how'd this...legend...get spread around? There was no one to pass it in through word of mouth. (*A long silence.*)

DEAN. You're so eager.

RUBY. What?

DEAN. To dissuade me.

RUBY. I'm asking questions. If you're concerned about this, we should have an open conversation about it. That involves questions – it helps to get the full picture. Right? That's the scholarly way to do it. You've said something like that before, something about Socrates. I don't know how much weight this story should hold as true if the involved parties couldn't

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

have possibly passed it on. I think. *(Another long silence.)*

DEAN. Bakenekos can speak.

RUBY. They passed on the story?

DEAN. It would seem that way.

RUBY. So...

DEAN. So, they told someone. As a warning. And people passed on that warning – because that’s how these legends work. They give us context so we can be cautious. So that we can be aware of the danger that surrounds us.

RUBY. Alright, but why-

DEAN. I’m not sure if I should be speaking to you right now. *(Dean turns away.)*

RUBY. What?

DEAN. I need to do some more reading.

RUBY. Don’t you want dinner?

DEAN. No.

RUBY. Let’s put a pin in this – we can pick it up after dinner. Camilla’s waiting-

DEAN. No.

RUBY. You have to eat. Come down.

DEAN. Leave me alone now, please. *(Ruby does not leave.)*

DEAN. Leave me alone now.

RUBY. Your daughter wants to eat dinner with you.

DEAN. I...eventually. Once I’m certain.

RUBY. Certain...

DEAN. You can go now.

RUBY. Certain of...?

DEAN. You have to go now! Go!

RUBY. I want to eat dinner with you.

DEAN. Go!

RUBY. We’ll wait five more minutes. *(Ruby exits. Dean quickly starts grabbing books and throwing them on his desk.)*

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

SCENE THREE

Camila and Liam have cleaned up most of the room now. The things that haven't already been hauled away to their car are all boxed up; aside from some miscellaneous items and books. Liam places some books in a box while Camila flips through some of her father's old journals.

LIAM. Any big secrets revealed in there?

CAMILA. Just the ramblings of a mad man. This one is just full of ideas for how to possibly kill a manticore. Like, he thought he was actually going to run into a manticore. As if one was just going to pop out of an alleyway...

LIAM. I don't even know what that is. I've heard of it sure – but if you told me to draw you a manticore...I'd probably, like, draw a pumpkin with horns or something.

CAMILA. A pumpkin with horns.

LIAM. It's what comes to mind.

CAMILA. Does that sound threatening enough to dedicate this many pages to killing? A pumpkin...with horns? *(Camila flips through pages of writing to show Liam how much there is.)*

LIAM. I have no idea. Hey, we can't all be as well-versed in this stuff as your father was.

CAMILA. I guess I should be grateful for that. *(Camila tosses the book in a box.)*

LIAM. Right. Ignorance is a virtue!

CAMILA. Uh-huh. *(Liam discovers something behind a pile of books. He pulls it out – it's a scroll.)*

LIAM. Check this out.

CAMILA. What is it?

LIAM. A scroll. Looks old. I don't see many scrolls, though. In my life – you know.

CAMILA. You have fun with that.

LIAM. You don't want to know what's inside? *(Liam briefly holds the scroll up to his eye and looks through it as if it were a telescope.)*

CAMILA. How cute.

LIAM. You're really not curious? Maybe you're looking for stuff in the

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

wrong place! Maybe he wasn't a journal-confessional guy...he was a scroll-confessional kind of guy!

CAMILA. Wow. Well, now that you suspect that the suspense is killing me.

LIAM. Be that way, I'll look at it then. And you'll just have to sit there and wonder what it could possibly be. *(Liam opens the scroll and stares at it for a bit.)*

LIAM. Oh.

CAMILA. What?

LIAM. Interesting...

CAMILA. Is it? Or are you trying to pretend it is so I'll really want to see it.

LIAM. A little bit of both. It's kind of morbid. What do you think? *(Liam turns the scroll to face her. It's a pencil drawing of a bakeneko cat on its hind legs, devouring a little girl.)*

LIAM. Pretty metal stuff.

CAMILA. More creepy stuff. No surprise there.

LIAM. I say we put it in the bathroom.

CAMILA. What?

LIAM. Yeah. Think about it – we get a nice frame, hang it right above the mirror.

CAMILA. No.

LIAM. Come on. Imagine it. Some unsuspecting guest in our apartment, using the bathroom, looking up and seeing...this. It could be very inspiring for bowel movements.

CAMILA. We're not bringing it home. None of this stuff is even coming near our home. *(Liam puts the scroll back where he found it.)*

LIAM. What do you mean?

CAMILA. I don't want any of this.

LIAM. No? Not a single thing? *(Liam runs his hands along the desk.)* This furniture is nice.

CAMILA. We're trashing it all. Everything.

LIAM. Woah. It's cool if you don't want to keep anything. I get that. Ninety-five percent of this stuff is completely useless to us. That doesn't mean we can't sell it, though.

CAMILA. It's all getting dumped.

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

LIAM. Like, look at some of these books. (*Liam moves to the bookshelf.*) Leatherback, pristine condition, you can tell they're old. Most of these are probably so niche that they're long out of print and some weird collector would be really into getting their hands on them. This one looks old. (*Liam takes a book off the shelf and holds it up.*) Ca-ching!

CAMILA. Let me see. (*Liam passes Camila the book. She opens it and rips some pages out.*) These books are worthless. (*Liam stares at her.*)

LIAM. If you keep doing that they will be.

CAMILA. I've made up my mind on this.

LIAM. Since when is money a bad thing?

CAMILA. The decision has been made, Liam.

LIAM. I'd like to re-open the matter for discussion then. Since, you know, it was never discussed in the first place.

CAMILA. That's because it's my stuff.

LIAM. I figured we would keep some stuff and sell the stuff we didn't want to keep.

CAMILA. You assumed that – nobody ever said that.

LIAM. This is a lot of stuff to just throw out.

CAMILA. Guess so. (*A silence.*)

LIAM. ...Do we have a reason?

CAMILA. Because it's my stuff and I want to throw it away!

LIAM. That argument would be fine if we were in preschool. But we're not. We're in a relationship and if you're not going to let me have a say in the matter, I think I should at least be given some sort of justification.

CAMILA. The justification is that I want it all thrown out.

LIAM. That's not justification.

CAMILA. You wanted a reason. I gave you a reason.

LIAM. It's literally throwing out money!

CAMILA. We've got the house, right? We're selling the house. We're going to be fine.

LIAM. That's a good start.

CAMILA. We have jobs. We have savings. We have this entire house we're going to sell. I think that's more than a good start. It's a lot more than most people have.

LIAM. Well, if that's what you're thinking...if you feel you've been handed too much at once...let's donate the stuff, not throw it out. Or sell it

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

and donate the money, even.

CAMILA. Sorry, no.

LIAM. I'm trying to compromise here.

CAMILA. I said I made up my mind on what I want to do with all of this and I meant it. I thought about this a lot. Just drop it.

LIAM. ...Okay. But, I don't understand. *(Camila continues flipping through journals.)* What if something here was worth a fortune? Then we could donate that money to charity. Any charity. Of your choice, of course. *(Liam grabs the book Camila ripped pages out of.)* This book – what if, even in it's current condition... missing a few pages, it's worth fifty-thousand dollars!

CAMILA. Wow. That's some imagination you've got.

LIAM. Who knows, right? Could be.

CAMILA. Sure. If it was made of gold - could be.

LIAM. Fifty-thousand, though. Would be a lot of money for an old dusty book. That's like fifty- thousand meals for starving children!

CAMILA. Assuming you feed them from the dollar menu, I guess.

LIAM. I'm sure the starving children of the world wouldn't mind that so much.

CAMILA. Liam, you're not trying to make me feel guilty, are you?

LIAM. No. I'm just saying.

CAMILA. Fine. You want to know why all of this is going to the trash?

LIAM. I do.

CAMILA. This stuff is poison.

LIAM. What do you mean?

CAMILA. Let me see that scroll. *(Liam passes Camila the scroll and she unfolds it.)* Look at that.

LIAM. I know. It's morbid, yeah. But there's a market for everything.

CAMILA. That's what worries me. You see this and you see something you can sell. The person who's buying it see's this and, I don't know. *(Pause.)* Maybe they look at this and start to think that whatever this might be could actually exist. Then they start obsessing over it. Then they buy this book to learn more- *(Camila now picks up the book with the torn pages.)* And they keep on buying stuff and they keep pushing their family away and before you know it, we created another copy of my father. All because we decided to make a quick buck off of some of his stuff. Off of

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

worthless relics and stupid, factually inaccurate, leatherbound books. I don't want to be the cataclyst for that. I can't have that on my consciousness. I would always be wondering who's life I ruined. After what he did to my family...it feels irresponsible for any of this to go anywhere but the trash. *(A silence.)*

LIAM. When you put it that way...

CAMILA. I don't want to hurt anyone.

LIAM. I get that, sorry. I feel like a bit of jerk now.

CAMILA. Don't worry about it.

LIAM. Even the furniture? It's normal furniture.

CAMILA. I don't want to take any chances. For all we know everything is full of secret compartments filled with more monster maiming material and manuals.

LIAM. I understand now. You could've just said all that. Little known fact - I'm actually very kind and very understanding.

CAMILA. I know you are. *(They laugh.)* All of this just makes me... sensitive...and sentimental...in a weird way. There are a lot of emotions this stuff brings out. That the house brings out.

LIAM. You spend a lot of time in this room?

CAMILA. No...only when I absolutely needed something from my father, really. And that was when I was older. By that time talking to him was like...trying to lasso a horsefly.

LIAM. I think we've been here long enough for today. We can finish tomorrow. You good to head out now?

CAMILA. Yeah – grab that box. *(Liam rolls of the scroll and throws it and the book into a box. He picks up the box.)*

LIAM. We'll stop by the dumpster on the way home.

CAMILA. Good.

SCENE FOUR

It's the past...but there's a strange woman in the office. Her back is to us, she's running her fingers along some books. She turns around, this is KIM, Ruby's sister. Kim walks to the the desk, moves some papers, and starts skimming through some of Dean's writings. Dean enters.

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

DEAN. Kim? *(Kim slowly turns away from the writings to look at Dean.)*

KIM. Surprise.

DEAN. What are you doing here?

KIM. Surprise visit. Hence the surprise.

DEAN. No. What are you doing up here? In my office. *(Kim holds up one of Dean's journals.)*

KIM. Espionage.

DEAN. Kim. *(Kim puts the journal back down on the desk.)*

KIM. I'm looking around. Jeez.

DEAN. Well, you shouldn't be going through other people's things.

KIM. Ruby's just talked about this room so much – I had to see it for myself. *(Kim does a loop around the room.)* It doesn't seem that special to me.

DEAN. What do you mean? What has she said?

KIM. That you spend all your time in this room instead of with your family. That you keep filling it with books and junk but it's never enough.

DEAN. She...she doesn't understand. And neither do you.

KIM. Clearly. *(Kim takes out a cigarette.)*

DEAN. Don't. We don't smoke in this house. Especially not up here. It's bad for the books. It makes the pages brittle. It ruins the binding.

KIM. Seriously?

DEAN. Yes. *(Kim puts the cigarette away.)*

KIM. You ask me, you'd be a lot happier if you just burned all these books to a crisp.

DEAN. It's a good thing I didn't ask you.

KIM. Maybe you should've.

DEAN. You know, Ruby and Camila aren't home right now. They're at the park.

KIM. And where were you?

DEAN. I was in the backyard.

KIM. Doing?

DEAN. Thinking. How'd you get in?

KIM. I have a spare key.

DEAN. Maybe you shouldn't.

KIM. Who should then? The Loch Ness monster?

DEAN. Don't make fun of things you don't understand.

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

KIM. Please. If I lived by that rule then I couldn't make fun of you and that would take some of the joy out of life.

DEAN. ...You can wait for Ruby downstairs.

KIM. I'm only here for the night, Dean. You could at least try to be hospitable.

DEAN. Just because you're my wife's sister doesn't mean you can just barge into our lives whenever you want. Especially not when you come here just to mock me!

KIM. And just because you're my sister's husband doesn't mean you can disregard her and your child like they were last weeks newspaper!

DEAN. You're hysterical. You don't even know what you're talking about.

KIM. I know exactly what I'm talking about. And so do you.

DEAN. No! You don't understand even on a foundational level what I'm dealing with – what I do for them.

KIM. You're a mess.

DEAN. No. I'm not. *(Kim sits down.)* I need to be alone in my office. Can you, please, go and wait downstairs? Help yourself to whatever you'd like.

KIM. I hate what you've done to her. The stress you cause her.

DEAN. We don't need your interference in our lives!

KIM. Well. You'll have your wish soon enough.

DEAN. What's that supposed to mean? *(Kim is silent for a moment.)*

KIM. She hasn't told you?

DEAN. Told me what? *(Kim laughs.)*

KIM. No, of course she wouldn't. Because her problems mean nothing to you. So, what good would telling you do?

DEAN. Kim. What are you talking about?

KIM. I have lung cancer. *(They're both silent.)* Surprise.

DEAN. I didn't know that.

KIM. Of course.

DEAN. I wish she would've told me that.

KIM. Doesn't make a difference.

DEAN. Are you getting treatment?

KIM. Nah. I started to...but then I thought – why on earth am I going to put myself through this? *(Pause.)* I can feel it. I'm marked for death.

DEAN. You couldn't possibly know that for a fact.

KIM. It's so funny to hear you talk about facts. You understand the irony

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

there, don't you? Like, you're not completely oblivious?

DEAN. Fine. You can make fun of me all you want. I know you're just lashing out. *(Kim laughs.)* You shouldn't just give up on life.

KIM. I didn't really have a say in the matter.

DEAN. How can you lecture me about family when you're doing absolutely nothing to make sure you stay around for yours?

KIM. My parents are dead. I don't have a husband. Ruby and Camila are the only family I've got left and I've always been there for them. If only you could say the same.

DEAN. Even if that were true, which it isn't. Now...you've decided to leave them. To leave everything behind. *(Kim stands up.)*

KIM. You think I don't want to live? I do. But it's just not in my stars. I've accepted that and everybody else is going to have to too.

DEAN. You may not be able to wrap your mind around it but there are alternatives to whirring, beeping machines, and doctors.

KIM. Oh. Really? *(Dean goes to the bookshelf and grabs a book, the one Camila ripped in the previous scene. He starts flipping through it.)* Give it a rest.

DEAN. Are you familiar with venomous lizards?

KIM. So intimately.

DEAN. There's this lizard, it's the Mexican beaded lizard. No, it's something closely related – it's on the tip of my tongue.

KIM. Put your book away.

DEAN. No. There's a lizard-like creature. An ancestor of lizards with a curing bite. It's worth a shot, even if you don't believe it. To live, isn't that worth a shot?

KIM. I don't want to hear this, put your book down!

DEAN. This is factual! There's scientific evidence! *(Kim snatches the book from him.)* Be careful! I try to take very good care of those!

KIM. I don't care! I told you to put it away!

DEAN. Don't be so thick-headed. I'm trying to help you!

KIM. I don't want your help! Even if I did – help from you means nothing! I might as well go get bit by a vampire, right? Then I'd have eternal life! I'd just have to stay in the shade. But who cares! I never liked the sun much anyway!

DEAN. I have all of this knowledge in my head. Let me be useful!

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

KIM. Your imagination can't cure cancer! (*A silence.*)

DEAN. I can't believe you're acting like this.

KIM. You are an infuriating, little man, who lives in fantasy world! I'm positive the only reason Ruby even puts up with you is because you have a child together.

DEAN. How could you say that to me?

KIM. Because it's the truth. Look. I'm not just here to say goodbye to Ruby and Camila. I'm here to tell you...you have two options. You either change your ways and become a better husband to your wife and a better father to your daughter. (*Pause.*) Or...you pray to God that monsters, ghouls, and ghosts aren't real. Because if they are, when I die, my mission in the afterlife is going to be to find all the demons, all the monstrosities that I can, and come back here and punish you. For what you're doing to a great woman and her child. I promise you.

DEAN. Kim, I-

KIM. It's not up for debate. (*A silence.*)

DEAN. ...You're here to say goodbye to them. Then what?

KIM. Then I leave.

DEAN. And go where?

KIM. I'm going to the coast. To the ocean.

DEAN. A beach day? That's your plan?

KIM. No. I'm leaving. (*Footsteps. Ruby enters.*)

RUBY. Oh! Kim!

KIM. There she is.

RUBY. I didn't know you were coming, I...we were at the park!

KIM. It was a surprise. Don't worry, Dean has been keeping me company. He was showing me his book collection. (*Kim holds up the book she snatched from Dean.*) Look. How pretty. (*Kim hands the book to Dean. Ruby and Kim hug.*) So, where's the rug rat?

RUBY. Oh, she's downstairs. Sipping on a juice box...what a great surprise! She's going to be so excited to see you. Come on. (*Ruby leads Kim to the door.*)

DEAN. Ruby. Do you mind if I speak to you for a moment?

RUBY. Of course. Kim you can go downstairs, I'll be down in a second.

KIM. I can wait up here.

DEAN. I'd rather speak to Ruby alone. Just for a moment. We need to

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

work out the logistics on a few things. *(Kim looks to Ruby. Ruby gives a nod of approval.)*

KIM. Right. I'll be downstairs. *(Kim exits. Dean listens for a moment and waits.)*

RUBY. I'm sorry. I really didn't know she was coming.

DEAN. I didn't know she had cancer. You didn't think to tell me that?

RUBY. ...I did tell you.

DEAN. What? No, you didn't.

RUBY. Yes, I did.

DEAN. No. Ruby didn't tell me that...

RUBY. I...yes, I did. It's my sister. Of course I told you...did you forget that?

DEAN. How often do you talk to her?

RUBY. What's the problem here?

DEAN. Just answer me.

RUBY. I don't know. A few times a week.

DEAN. Do I treat you well?

RUBY. What?

DEAN. It's not that complicated a question. Am I good to you?

RUBY. Yes.

DEAN. Your sister doesn't seem to think so.

RUBY. She just wants the best for me. You know that.

DEAN. And I'm not that.

RUBY. That's not what I meant.

DEAN. She's not getting treatment, you know? She's just giving up on life.

RUBY. ...No. I wasn't aware of that.

DEAN. It's selfish.

RUBY. It's...it's – she knows what's best for herself.

DEAN. Sounds like she knows what's best for everyone and everything!

RUBY. Can we not do this?

DEAN. I can help her. But she's refusing my help!

RUBY. What? How?

DEAN. There's research! There are ways we can combat this! I was trying to show her but she doesn't even want to take the chance!

RUBY. I just want to go downstairs and spend time with her. Can we just

MONSTERS ARE MADE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

do that?

DEAN. She came here to attack me. To call me a bad husband and a bad father. When all I've done is try to help.

RUBY. You're not a bad husband and you're not a bad father.

DEAN. Maybe I am. I can't protect anyone.

RUBY. Dean. *(Kim enters with a juicebox.)*

KIM. Time's up. Come and be good hosts. Entertain your guest! Camila can only offer up so much conversation.

RUBY. We're coming. Come on, Dean.

DEAN. I'll be there in a second. There's just...I have a passage...in a book. I wanted to finish reading it first.

RUBY. Okay.

KIM. We won't wait up. *(Ruby gives Kim a look.)* Kidding. We wait with bated breath. *(Kim and Ruby exit. Dean puts his book back on the shelf.)*

END OF ACT ONE

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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