

A VISITATION IN 12B

By
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A VISITATION IN 12B

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A VISITATION IN 12B

for David, Bill, Susan and Winni

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CAST: 2 Women, 3 Men, 1 Male Voice

PAUL MICHAELSON: Mid-late 40's, a pompous academic.
MONA MCHAELSON: 29, his wife, beautiful, insecure, a bit childlike.
MYSTERY WOMAN: 20's-30's, uninvited visitor with a mission.
DETECTIVE KRAVITZ: Late 40's-50's, one of NY's finest. A seen-it-all bloodhound type, grumpy and shrewd.
DETECTIVE BRENNAN: 30's, attractive, seemingly low-key. The "good cop" of the duo.
VOICE ON INTERCOM: Typical NY doorman.

TIME: Early April, the present.

PLACE: The Michaelsons' well-appointed Central Park West apartment.

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PAUL and MONA MICHAELSON are in the bedroom of their well-appointed apartment on Central Park West in NYC, preparing to go to a party. Paul is mid- late 40's, a slightly pompous Columbia University college professor; Mona is 29, beautiful, insecure, and a bit childlike.

PAUL. For God's sake, Mona, will you hurry it up? We're going to be late!

MONA. I'm coming, I'm coming! I can't find my earrings!

PAUL. You've only got about 50 pairs! Pick one and go!

MONA. *(Riffling frantically through jewelry box.)* I'm looking for the little ones you gave me for my birthday. I know they're in here somewhere!

PAUL. Jesus H. Christ. Let me help you. *(Goes to her.)* I don't know how you find anything in this rat's nest. Your entire side of the bureau is like a Bermuda triangle for accessories.

MONA. I know I put them in here somewhere...

PAUL. Mona, how many times have I told you, put your earrings on the earring tree! I bought you it specifically to avoid a situation like this, but do you ever use it? Oh no! You prefer to throw them in a junk heap and then spend an hour finding them again! Which is doubly unfortunate, because as it is you take more time to get dressed than Louis the XIVth!

MONA. Paul, I told you, I don't like that earring tree. The holes are so small. And how do you know how long it took Louis the XIVth to get ready?

PAUL. I'm an historian. Trust me. *(Finds earrings.)* Aha. Eureka!

MONA. Oh, wow! Thank you, baby! *(Gives him a kiss.)* I love these earrings.

PAUL. *(Kissing her back.)* Here. Let me put them on for you. *(Does so; admires her.)* I must say you're a lot prettier than Louis the XIVth.

MONA. Thanks a lot.

PAUL. You really are gorgeous, you know.

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MONA. (*Rolling her eyes.*) Oh, Paul.

PAUL. What? You are!

MONA. I am not.

PAUL. Why do you always say that? You are!

MONA. Alright, alright! If you say so.

PAUL. And who would have a better sense of aesthetics than me?

MONA. I don't know. God?

PAUL. Sarcasm doesn't become you, Mona.

MONA. I wasn't being sarcastic.

PAUL. I suggest you look up the meaning of the word, You might find it edifying. (*Beat.*) So. Are we finally ready to go toast the birthday boy?

MONA. I just need to touch up my eye makeup. It'll only take a minute.

PAUL. Mona, please. It's a surprise birthday party. Dr. Rob is going to be 70, it's a big deal, and I don't like to rush.

MONA. Just give me a second! (*Smudges eyeliner.*) I love the way you call him Dr. Rob.

PAUL. Well, he never wanted to be called "Professor." It seemed too casual to call him Rob. Dr. Rob just kind of fit.

MONA. I think it's great the way you've always kept in touch with him. I never had a relationship with a teacher like that.

PAUL. You never went to graduate school. Or even graduated college, for that matter – tsk tsk! Grad school is where you forge relationships like that. Dr. Rob was a beacon for me. He helped me shape my dissertation, helped me get it published, helped me get my first job. He's a great guy. You'll be seeing a lot of him this summer.

MONA. Oh. Right.

PAUL. "Oh. Right." Is that all the enthusiasm you can drum up? This could be the biggest break of my academic career!

MONA. Oh honey. I'm sorry. I just don't know what I'm going to be doing all by myself for three months at an excavation site in Wales.

PAUL. Oh, for God's sake! You're not going to be alone! I'm going to be there! And at least 20 graduate students on the crew! And it's a magnificent place! An island, with your name! The Isle of Mona. Anyone else would be thrilled!

MONA. Oh, Paul. Forget what I said. I'm sure it'll be fine.

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PAUL. Damn straight it'll be fine. It'll be stupendous! Now can we please go?

MONA. *(Turning to him.)* Finished!

PAUL. Hallelujah! I'll get your coat.

MONA. Paul?

PAUL. What?

MONA. Promise me you won't leave me alone too much there.

PAUL. What, at the party?

MONA. Yeah. I just...don't always feel like I fit in.

PAUL. Oh, Christ! You're not starting in with that again, are you?

MONA. No! I just...get a little nervous. You know.

PAUL. Mona, my darling. Those...episodes are a thing of the past.

You have me now! You're beautiful, and I love you. Why are you still so insecure?

MONA. I don't know. I just...*(Doorbell rings.)*

PAUL. Good God! Who could that be? And why didn't the doorman buzz first? I'll have to talk to him – for what we're paying for this apartment, the staff should be like the Buckingham Palace guards! *(Opens door. A pale young woman with black waist-length hair dressed in a torn and disheveled red floor-length ancient Celtic dress stands in the doorway, then tumbles headfirst onto the floor.)* What the hell? *(Mona screams.)*

MYSTERY WOMAN. *(Mumbling/chanting in an ancient tongue.)* Em gurthotes tres traguiar linnos...

PAUL. *(Kneeling next to her.)* Who are you? What are you doing here?

MYSTERY WOMAN. Hametha rac tigrinedos tabele bedin...

PAUL. What? What are you saying?

MYSTERY WOMAN. *(Beginning to sing.)* Rumawane ha guwacaunos guwurde incaleta...

MONA. Oh my God. She's bleeding!

PAUL. Call 911. Hurry! *(Mystery Woman moans and shudders. Paul takes handkerchief from his coat pocket and administers to her. Suddenly, she reaches up and pulls him down to her with great urgency, singing to him directly.)*

MYSTERY WOMAN. Turuptane hatharanaros ha riperuthi guwaritu arteracauthos marcawach lesitri...

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MONA. *(On phone.)* Hello? Yes. I'm calling to report an emergency...

MYSTERY WOMAN. *(Pulling Paul down further.)* Guwata rapetha milicah schenoor...

PAUL. I'm sorry, miss. I'm really at a loss here. Do you by any chance speak English?

MONA. I can't believe it. They have me on hold!

MYSTERY WOMAN. *(Pulling Paul down even further, speaking with great intensity.)* Schlately! Schlately! Schlasso! *(She makes a move to remove something in her pocket, but suddenly tenses up and then slumps lifelessly like a rag doll on the floor before she can do so.)*

PAUL. Mona? Have you got them?

MONA. Finally! They just picked up! *(To 911 operator.)* Yes, we have an emergency here. A young woman just showed up at our apartment – we don't know her, but she's bleeding and on the floor and she doesn't speak English – I think she's in bad shape – oh, thank you. We're at 295 Central Park West at 85th St., Apt. 12B. *(Beat.)* The name is Michaelson. The telephone number is 212-646-7482. *(Beat.)* Okay. Thanks. *(Hangs up phone, runs to Paul.)* They'll be here in five minutes. *(Looks at Mystery Woman.)* Oh my God! Is she okay?

PAUL. I don't know...I think she's dead. *(They look at each other in shock. Lights fade.)*

SCENE 2

The next morning. The body has been removed. Paul and Mona are sitting on the couch in the living room.

PAUL. Jesus H. Christ. What a night. I still can't get over it.

MONA. Me too. I can still see her eyes. It's like they're branded on my brain.

PAUL. *(Hugging her.)* Poor baby. I was so worried about you. After the ambulance came, you collapsed like the Berlin Wall.

MONA. I know. I was suddenly just so unbelievably exhausted. I feel like I've been sleeping for days.

PAUL. *(Tenderly.)* My sweet succulent narcoleptic.

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MONA. Oh, Paul! It was so terrible!

PAUL. This is true.

MONA. Who was that woman?

PAUL. I don't know – but I certainly hope Consuela can get rid of those bloodstains. I just love that maple veneer.

MONA. Her face – for some reason I feel like I've seen it before.

PAUL. You must be imagining things. How could that possible be?

(Intercom buzzes.) Yes?

VOICE ON INTERCOM. Uh – two gentlemen to see you.

PAUL. Well, who are they?

VOICE ON INTERCOM. Detectives.

PAUL. Oh. Well – send them up.

VOICE ON INTERCOM. I already did.

PAUL. *(Sarcastically.)* Thanks for the tip. *(To Mona.)* Looks like New York's finest are paying us a call. *(Doorbell rings. Paul opens door. Two detectives stand in doorway, DETECTIVE KRAVITZ and DETECTIVE BRENNAN.)*

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Mr. Michaelson?

PAUL. Actually, it's Doctor Michaelson, but close enough.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. *(Consulting notepad.)* You're an MD?

PAUL. College professor.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Gotcha. I'm Detective Kravitz, and that's Detective Brennan. And this is ---?

PAUL. My wife. Mona.

MONA. *(Shyly.)* Hello.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Well, hello there.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Okay. Now that the introductions have been made, let's cut to the chase. Seems you had a visitor last night.

PAUL. Yes, we did. We're still reeling from the shock. This has been immensely difficult for us.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. I can imagine. Do you have any idea who this woman was?

PAUL. Absolutely not a clue.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. How about you, Mrs. M.? Did she ring any bells?

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PAUL. I can assure you my wife is as much in the dark about this as I am.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. I'd prefer to hear it from her own mouth, if you don't mind. Mrs. Michaelson?

MONA. Well, actually – I have no idea who she was, but her face did look – somewhat familiar.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. You don't say. How so?

PAUL. Detective Kravitz, if I may interject here. My wife is a fragile woman, and she's been completely traumatized by this event. I sincerely doubt that this conjecture has any basis in fact.

MONA. Paul!

PAUL. Mona, my pet, you know you have a tendency to imagine things when you're upset. To – exaggerate notions, make ungrounded connections...

MONA. All I said was...

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Whoah! Mr. Michaelson, why don't we let the little lady speak for herself, okay? Believe me, obstructing an investigation is not something you want added to your no-doubt illustrious CV. Do I make myself clear?

PAUL. *(Huffily.)* Quite.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Thank you. Now, Mrs. Michaelson. How did this woman look familiar to you?

MONA. I – don't really know. It was something about her eyes – but maybe Paul's right. Maybe it was just a dream I had. Really, I'm sorry I said anything. I never saw her before in my life! *(Sits down on couch, breathing hard, clutching her heart.)*

PAUL. Mona! Are you alright? *(She nods, on the brink of tears.)* Do you want some water?

MONA. No, I'm alright. I'm fine. I just – need to lie down for awhile. My head is spinning!

PAUL. *(To cops, self-righteously.)* I told you my wife was delicate.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. No argument there.

PAUL. Can we continue this some other time? I really would like to see to my wife.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Actually, no. No time like the present.

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PAUL. (*sarcastically*) I see. Well, my wife is presently incapacitated. Does she have your permission to leave?

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. No problem. We'll continue with her some other time.

MONA. Please forgive me – I'm so sorry.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Don't worry about it. Get some rest.

PAUL. I'll take you to the bedroom.

MONA. No, I can make it by myself. You just stay here.

PAUL. Don't be ridiculous. You're trembling like a leaf.

MONA. Really, I can manage...

PAUL. Ssshhhhhh! Now that's enough. Come on, come on, that's a good girl...there we go... (*He assists her to bedroom, murmuring encouragement along the way. Detectives regard each other.*)

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Whaddya think?

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. There's something fishy in the state of Denmark – and I don't mean the paté.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Ditto. Some joint, though. Check out those statues! Looks like a freakin' museum in here.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. I smell trust fund – teachers don't make that much, even if they're Einstein's obnoxious nephew like Golden Boy there.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. He's coming back – zip it. (*Paul returns, sits down on couch, addresses detectives.*)

PAUL. Now. Where were we?

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. The missus okay?

PAUL. She'll live. So how can I help you gentlemen?

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Were you expecting anyone last night?

PAUL. No. As a matter of fact, we were planning to go out.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Yeah? Where?

PAUL. To a party. A surprise birthday party for a professional colleague.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Hmmmm. So let me get this straight.

According to our report, this woman shows up at your doorstep, bleeding, dressed in some wild Goth get-up. You have no idea who she is, you weren't expecting anyone, and the doorman claims he never saw her enter the building.

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DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Funny how you could miss someone like that. She wasn't exactly nondescript.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Uh-huh. It's a little odd, don't you think?

PAUL. Of course it's odd. That goes without saying.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. I'll continue to say it, if you don't mind.

PAUL. Whatever. Look, I'm telling you all that I know. Neither I nor my wife had ever seen that woman before. We're completely traumatized.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Look, Mr. Michaelson ---

PAUL. Doctor, if you don't mind.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. I stand corrected. Dr. Michaelson, do you know anyone who would want to kill you?

PAUL. Just my colleagues.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Give us a list. We'll look into it.

PAUL. I was joking.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Don't.

PAUL. (*Growing exasperated.*) Oh, for God's sake! What is this all about?

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Your picture was found in her – bodice.

PAUL. My picture! What do you mean?

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. It was an article. From the Columbia Spectator. Something about you going on an excavation – to Wales, I believe. Your picture appeared at the top.

PAUL. Oh no.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Oh yes. And not only that – there was a dagger going through it.

PAUL. (*Stunned.*) Through my picture?

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. (*Nodding gravely.*) Right through your forehead. A small one. (*Paul starts swaying, making a strange keening sound and loosening his tie.*)

PAUL. Air! Air! I need air!

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Calm down, pal. Just put your head between your knees and breathe deep. (*Paul does so.*) There you go. Better?

PAUL. Thank you, yes. I think I'm alright now. A little shocking, but I'm sure there's some logical explanation. And after all, what does it matter now? The girl is dead. (*Beat.*) Right?

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DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Well, there is a complication.

PAUL. What do you mean?

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. As of this morning, she's disappeared.

PAUL. What?

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. In the morgue last night; this morning – gone with the wind.

PAUL. Oh my God! How is that possible?

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. We don't know yet – but we're going to find out.

PAUL. (*Hyperventilating.*) I think I'm going to be sick.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Just calm down. Keep breathing. You'll be fine.

PAUL. All I know is that if that corpse is on the loose, I'm going to require a dagger-proof vest!

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. We'll check with wardrobe. In the meantime, how about giving us some information.

PAUL. Like what?

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. You said she was speaking a foreign language.

PAUL. Yes. She was.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Any idea of what that might be?

PAUL. I don't know. It was very strange, but there was also something vaguely familiar about it...it...sounded like it could have been a bastardization of Old Brythonic.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Come again?

PAUL. Old Brythonic. It's the language that was spoken all over Britain in ancient times up to the 5th century AD.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. You know a lot about languages, then.

PAUL. I've studied them a bit, yes. You have to, as an historian.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. What exactly do you teach at Columbia?

PAUL. Iron Age European archaeology. And a graduate seminar on late Etruscan pottery shards.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Nice. You enjoy it?

PAUL. I wouldn't do it if I didn't.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. My son applied to Columbia.

PAUL. Really.

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DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. He didn't get in.

PAUL. Oh. Sorry.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Any students who might have it in for you?

PAUL. I don't think they'd take it that far.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. We'll need a list. Plus your colleagues. We'll check out their kids – maybe they've got a psycho daughter suddenly gone missing. But for now, let's get back to this language thing. You say that you recognized this as Old Brythonic.

PAUL. No, no. I said it might possibly be a bastardization of Old Brythonic.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. We'll note the distinction. Now, did you understand any of what she was saying?

PAUL. No.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Do you speak Old Brythonic?

PAUL. I wouldn't say I speak it. No one's really spoken it for 1,600 years.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Yet you know it enough to recognize it when you hear it.

PAUL. I wouldn't say I recognized it, just that what I heard sounded like it could be a bast-

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. –ardization of Old Brythonic. I think we've established that. What I want to know is, how did you make that connection?

PAUL. It's a certain sound. The tone that the epiglottis makes when it's curving over the syllables. The way the words resonate in your ear. It's – kind of like remembering music you've never actually consciously heard, but is somehow imprinted on a cellular level.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. I see. Could you speak a little Brythonic for us?

PAUL. Old Brythonic.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. I stand corrected. Could you regale us with a few words?

PAUL. Well, I'm more than a little rusty. I haven't read or attempted to speak it in years.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. How many years?

PAUL. Probably not since my dissertation. That would be about – twenty.

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DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Why don't you dip into that cellular level and see what you can come up with.

PAUL. I mean no disrespect, Detective, but I don't know that I like your tone.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. I'll live. *(Beat.)* We're waiting.

PAUL. *(Flustered.)* Well, it's a bit like...I'm sorry. I can't perform for you on command. I'm an academic, not a trained seal!

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Really? Could've fooled me. *(Off Paul's look.)* Sorry.

PAUL. Why are you so interested in this, anyway? I never knew detectives were linguists.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Don't worry, pal. We've got our reasons.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. We'll stop by again tomorrow. About 10 AM. Brush up on your Old Brythonic, and we'll get cracking. *(They begin to leave.)*

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. *(Waving hand.)* Ciao. *(They exit. Paul slumps down on couch. In the background we hear wild Celtic music, and the faint sound of laughter.)*

SCENE 3

That night. Paul and Mona in bed. Paul is snoring, Mona is sleeping. Suddenly she jerks awake and screams.

MONA. Augggghhhhhh!!!

PAUL. *(Startled awake.)* What? What is it?

MONA. *(Catching her breath.)* Oh my God! She's still here!

PAUL. Who's still here?

MONA. Her! That woman! She was right there! In my head! Oh, Paul!

PAUL. *(Hugging her.)* There, there, baby girl. You just had a bad dream. You're safe now.

MONA. *(Deeply shaken.)* Oh, God! It was so terrible!

PAUL. Sssshhhhh. Sssshhhhh. It's alright. I'm here. You're okay.

MONA. *(Starting to recover a bit; breathing deep.)* Ohhhhhhhh.

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PAUL. *(Stroking her hair.)* Feeling a little better now?

MONA. Yeah. A little. Oh Jesus. What a dream!

PAUL. Tell me about it.

MONA. I don't know if I remember – it's getting all foggy now – but it was so real when it was happening!

PAUL. Try.

MONA. *(Searching hard.)* Well – it was something about – being in a rowboat – on the Lake of Lost Languages – that's what it was called – and trying to get across. There was a shadow there – like a hood – and this kind of – burning sensation – but not hot – more like ice – burning ice – and – I can't explain it -- this feeling like – being swallowed – and she was there...

PAUL. Who was there?

MONA. You know who. Her. That girl.

PAUL. That's quite a dream.

MONA. There was more, but...*(Suddenly starts to cry.)* Oh, Paul! I'm so frightened!

PAUL. There, there. It's just a dream. You're alright now. *(He kisses her. They snuggle for a bit.)*

MONA. Paul?

PAUL. Yes?

MONA. Would you get me some water?

PAUL. Of course, angel girl. Be back in a jif. *(Goes offstage. Suddenly red light appears over the bed; perhaps some ominous chanting. Lights and music stop when he returns with a glass of water.)* Here you go.

MONA. Thank you, sweetheart. *(She drinks water.)* It's good. *(Suddenly she spits it out onto his face.)*

PAUL. *(Shocked.)* Mona! What did you do that for?

MONA. What?

PAUL. You just spit on me!

MONA. *(Genuinely stunned.)* No I didn't!

PAUL. Don't you lie to me! You most certainly did!

MONA. What are you talking about? I would never do that!

PAUL. Well, I don't know what planet you're on, but if you look at me, you'll see your expectoration still adorning my chin! *(Mona looks at him,*

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initially shocked; then suddenly her expression changes, and she moves toward him and licks it off.)

MONA. *(Seductively.)* Make love to me, Paul.

PAUL. Wh-wh-wh-what?

MONA. I want you to fuck me. Now.

PAUL. But it's – 4 AM! You never like to make love this late! And you never – initiate!

MONA. Things change.

PAUL. But we have to get up early! Those detectives are coming again at 10, and – *(His eyes bug out in reaction to certain activities taking place surreptitiously beneath the covers.)*

MONA. I know your tongue has other talents besides talking.

PAUL. *(Stunned and hoarse.)* Did you set the alarm?

SCENE 4

The next morning, Paul and Mona's living room. Paul is fixing his tie and beaming. He is quite buoyant.

PAUL. *(Singing.)* “Take my hand, I'm a stranger in Paradise...”

MONA. *(Entering.)* My my. Someone's in a good mood today!

PAUL. Hmmm. I wonder why that could be.

MONA. You remembered your Old Brythonic?

PAUL. *(Wiggling his brows suggestively.)* As a matter of fact, I have remembered my old bag of tricks – and learned a few new ones as well.

MONA. *(Absently.)* That's nice, honey. Have you seen my black sweater? I can't find it anywhere.

PAUL. Forget black sweaters, baby. Think red satin and sequins!

MONA. What are you talking about?

PAUL. Don't play innocent with me, my pigeon! I've never seen you the way you were last night – you were a wild woman!

MONA. Huh?

PAUL. I must admit I was a little startled at first, especially after that spitting incident – but then I realized what must have happened. All this turmoil and trauma we've been through has somehow acted as some kind

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of catalyst, a fissure if you will, breaking through the iceberg of your sexual proclivities – or non-proclivities, as it were – not that I had any complaints, you know, but – now! Madone! Although I do think my back could use a few Band-Aids... (*Mona looks puzzled. Doorbell rings.*) Ah! That must be the Manhattan Inquisition. I'll get it!

MONA. I'll be there in a minute. I have to get my sweater. I feel so cold! (*Paul opens door to detectives.*)

PAUL. Hello, gentlemen. Entrez! (*They enter.*)

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Morning. (*Detective Kravitz nods grumpily.*)

PAUL. (*With great brio.*) Huit ammguwacas Votadinos medum ha uinum inidiengingos instaringa starega killameny instragius darru!

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. What the hell does that mean?

PAUL. "Thus the Votadnian tribesman fought for mead and wine in the fierce fight, in the conflict on the borderland."

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Huh?

PAUL. It's Old Brythonic. Isn't that what you came here to hear?

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Jesus H. Christ. Why'd you pick that?

PAUL. (*Insulted.*) What, my choice of text isn't good enough for you? I didn't know I was supposed to come up with something pithy. I thought you just wanted to hear some Old Brythonic. Well, that's it. I'm through casting my linguistic pearls before... (*Detective Kravitz shoots him a look; Paul changes approach.*) Would – anybody like some tea?

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. I'll pass.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Ditto. So this lingo you were just spouting, that's close to what the girl was speaking?

PAUL. I told you. It was a bastardization. But somewhat recognizable, yes.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. (*Taking out tape recorder.*) You wanna run it by us again?

PAUL. If you insist. (*Clears throat dramatically.*) Huit ammguwacas votadinos medum ha uinum inidiengingos instaringa starega killameny instragius darru!

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Thanks. Couldn't have said it better myself. (*Switches off tape recorder.*) Now, Mr. Michaelson –

PAUL. Doctor Michaelson.

A VISITATION IN 12B

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Whatever. We need to know a little bit more about this Old Bri-whaddyacallit thing. Where'd you first learn it again?

PAUL. It's Old Bry-thon-ic, and I learned it for my dissertation, roughly 20 years ago.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Right. So what was the subject of that dissertation?

PAUL. I reiterate my original question. Why is this pertinent?

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Talk first. Explanations later.

PAUL. Alright. My dissertation. Well...it was on the Roman settlement of Britain in the 1st century A.D., and how certain indigenous pagan sects were destroyed by that encroaching power.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. "Certain indigenous pagan sects." Can you give us an actual name here?

PAUL. Alright. Druids.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. (*Writing in notebook.*) Druids. Uh-huh. What do you know about them?

PAUL. I don't know where to begin with a question like that.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. How about a few basic facts.

PAUL. Well – actually, there's very little we know about them. See, they didn't believe in writing anything down.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Yeah? Why not?

PAUL. They thought if you wrote anything down, there'd be no reason anymore for you to remember it.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Sounds like a secretary we got at the precinct.

PAUL. I see this is now an occasion for jocularly.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Lighten up, pal. You need us. What else do you know?

PAUL. The History of Druids, from A to A-minus. Alright. Basically, Druids were the priests of the ancient Celts in Gaul, Britain and Ireland. They were the keepers of their religion. They worshipped in oak groves, they believed in reincarnation, in shape-shifting, in the magical qualities of the natural world...because they didn't write anything down, they passed their lore on through memory. Besides the priests, there were the bards – the singers of songs, the passers-down of sacred knowledge.

A VISITATION IN 12B

They were all over pre-Christian Celtic society, but were increasingly driven out by the Roman army. By 65 AD, they were concentrated on the Isle of Mona, an island off the coast of Wales which is now called Anglesey. The Romans exterminated them there. That's pretty much the end of the story.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Anything else?

PAUL. Well – they did believe in human sacrifice.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. You don't say.

PAUL. But only as a very special offering to the gods. It wasn't common.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. But it could happen.

PAUL. Occasionally, yes...but why are you asking me this? Is there something you're not telling me? (*Mona enters.*)

MONA. Hello.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Good morning, Mrs. Michaelson. Feeling better today?

MONA. Yes, thank you. I'm so sorry I had to leave yesterday.

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. No problem. We'll get to you in a bit. Your husband was just regaling us with a little bit of Old Brythonic. (*Paul smiles modestly, but with obvious self-congratulation.*)

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Fascinating stuff. Do you speak it too?

MONA. Me? Oh no.

PAUL. Linguistics is not exactly Mona's field.

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Is that so? What is your field?

MONA. Well, nothing, really. I mean not right now.

PAUL. My wife is a singer. She's quite good.

MONA. Oh Paul. I haven't sung in years.

PAUL. That doesn't mean you won't again someday.

MONA. I don't think that's going to happen.

PAUL. Never say never. No one knows what the future holds. Unless you're psychic, of course. (*He laughs.*)

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Do you know any psychics?

PAUL. What do you take me for? I was making a joke!

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Don't quit your day job. How 'bout you, Mrs. M.? Do you know any psychics? Talked to any on the phone, maybe?

MONA. No, never. Why do you ask?

A VISITATION IN 12B

PAUL. My sentiments exactly! What's the point of all this? And what in the world would psychics have to do with it?

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Look. I'm not at liberty to tell you everything we know, but let's just say this isn't the first time this kind of thing has happened. Strange woman dressed in some weird-ass Gothic get-up shows up at someone's door, babbling in some unrecognizable language, and then...

PAUL. Yes?

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. You don't want to know.

PAUL. Oh my God! Are we in any danger here? Because if we are, I demand 24-hour police surveillance! I pay taxes, and I know people in City Hall!

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Look. There's no reason to get hysterical. Just calm down – chances are you'll be the exception.

PAUL. Exception???

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Mrs. Michaelson, I want to hear exactly what you remember about this woman. You said that her eyes seemed familiar. Had you ever seen her before?

PAUL. She already answered that yesterday! She doesn't know! My God, man, do you want her to have a setback?

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. Mr. Michaelson, don't make me lose my patience.

PAUL. It's Doc...

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. *(Hand up.)* Don't.

MONA. *(On the verge of tears, again beginning to hyperventilate.)* I'm so sorry. I really don't remember, I swear I don't. I'm racking my brain, but I can't come up with anything!

PAUL. Mona? Are you alright?

MONA. *(Breathing heavily, sitting down.)* I'm fine. Just fine. *(Paul looks at detectives accusingly.)*

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. *(Giving her his card.)* Look. If you remember anything about this woman, anything at all, give us a call. And let us know if you experience anything – unusual.

PAUL. *(Sputtering.)* We live in New York City! You can't walk down the street without experiencing something unusual!

A VISITATION IN 12B

DETECTIVE BRENNAN. Just keep an eye out, okay? Call if anything comes up. We'll be in touch. *(To Mona.)* Goodbye, Mrs. Michaelson.

MONA. Goodbye. And I'm so sorry I couldn't have been more help.

PAUL. I'm expecting you to protect us! There are such things as lawsuits, you know!

DETECTIVE KRAVITZ. We'll take it under consideration. Ta-ta for now. *(They exit. Paul turns to Mona.)*

PAUL. Do you believe this? Apparently, we've been the victim of some sort of trend! *(Looks at Mona closely.)* What's wrong? Are you still feeling sick?

MONA. I just remembered – I never found my sweater. It's gone. It was in the closet last night, and now it's not.

PAUL. What does not finding your sweater have to do with anything?

MONA. Well – it's something unusual, isn't it? *(Paul regards her as hypnotic Celtic music plays in the background.)*

SCENE 5

A few days after detectives' visit. Paul on phone in living room.

PAUL. *(In the middle of a conversation.)* Sounds like it was a spectacular party. I'm so sorry Mona and I couldn't be there, but – well, you know that story. *(Beat.)* No, we haven't heard a thing more, and frankly I'm tired of worrying about it. Let the dead be dead, and the living start planning for the future! So. We meet tomorrow at Café Arte. 2 o'clock with bells on! I'm looking forward to it. *(Beat.)* Righto. See you tomorrow. Au revoir for now, mon ami! *(Hangs up phone. Mona enters.)*

MONA. Who was that?

PAUL. Dr. Rob. We're finalizing the plans for the excavation tomorrow. I'm throwing off the chains of fear and riding shotgun back into the fray!

MONA. Oh.

PAUL. Self-preservation marching to the fore! I need my energy, and so do you. There's a lot to be done before we leave. Passports, packing...why are you looking so sad?

MONA. Am I?

A VISITATION IN 12B

PAUL. You can't fool me, my little cabbage. What's going on?

MONA. Oh, it's just...I don't know what I'm going to be doing there for the whole summer.

PAUL. Oh God, not this again. You're going to be in Wales, for Christ's sake! The sacred home of the ancient Celts! On the Isle of MONA, Mona – practically your spiritual soil! It's the original magical mystery tour! What do you mean, you don't know what you're going to be doing there?

MONA. Don't be angry, Paul. It's just that – you're going to be digging at the site, and all involved, and – what am I going to do?

PAUL. Do you want to not go? Is that what you want?

MONA. No, I – I don't know. I don't want to be away from you for the whole summer. I just – won't know what to do with myself.

PAUL. Mona, Mona, Mona. You need to be more self-actualizing. How many times have we talked about that? You need to embark on a project! Something to get you out of yourself – or more into yourself. Dig deep! Be your own excavation site! Find the buried treasure in your own virtual back yard!

MONA. Oh Paul. I don't know what I could do! Maybe – maybe I could help you on the dig?

PAUL. Don't be ridiculous. You know nothing about it, and you'd ruin your nails. Why don't you start singing again? I'll ask around, see if I can get you a coach for the summer. There are towns not far off, and we'll have a car. They sing in Wales, you know. Just like everywhere. Music is the universal language!

MONA. Paul, please. You know I can't.

PAUL. That was three years ago, Mona. You should be over it by now.

MONA. Well I'm not. And I don't think I ever will be.

PAUL. Don't be so negative. It was a fluke. A temporary synapse of the senses. Perhaps the best thing for you would be to get back on that melodic horse and start galloping! Put on your Valkyrie helmet and charge!

MONA. *(Near tears.)* Paul! You know I can't perform anymore! I – feel like I'd have to be another person to do that again!

PAUL. Mona, it was a panic attack! Nothing more! It's not voodoo – it's a common occurrence! You just have to learn to push through it!

A VISITATION IN 12B

MONA. You've never had one! You don't know what it was like! I felt like I was going to die! The air was sucked out of my lungs! I couldn't remember the lyrics! I was sweating like I was in the Amazon rain forest! Hyperventilating! I felt like I was going to pass out! It was so frightening! I can't go through that again!

PAUL. Balderdash! I'm sure you could get over it if you put your mind to it. Maybe hypnosis! Acupuncture! Medication! Or a new kind of therapy! Cognitive this time, instead of analytic...I hear they're doing wonderful things with biofeedback...*(Mona starts to cry.)* Oh no, not again. Will you stop with the waterworks? I'm really getting tired of this. You need to grow up and take command of your situation!

MONA. Stop telling me what to do! You act like I can just snap my fingers, and boom! I'm cured! No more anxiety, no more dread! Well let me tell you, it's not that simple. You have no idea what it's like being inside my head!

PAUL. Yes, and I consider myself blessed by the gods for that!

MONA. You know what? You're a pompous ass.

PAUL. How dare you say that? I'm only trying to help you!

MONA. I don't need you to help me! I need you to understand me.

PAUL. Oh, please. I don't think you understand your own self! It's like there's something missing – and I have no idea what that is. If only you would... *(there's a sudden loud crash from offstage.)* What was that?

MONA. I don't know!

PAUL. I'm going to find out. *(He goes offstage. Beat. Soon we hear a loud gasp from him, followed by a prolonged wail.)* Oh my God!

Noooooooooooooo!

MONA. *(Running to find him.)* Paul! What is it? *(She almost collides with him as he returns from offstage. He is stunned, carrying the broken shards of what once was a statue, like a body for burial.)*

PAUL. *(Grief-stricken.)* My little 1st-century stone Epona statue! The Celtic fertility goddess! Broken!

MONA. Oh, no. How did it happen?

PAUL. I don't know. Somehow it must have fallen off the shelf! It was just lying there – like this! *(Indicates broken pieces, chokes back a sob.)*

MONA. Oh, Paul. I'm so sorry.

A VISITATION IN 12B

PAUL. *(In a kind of reverie.)* This can't be. She was one of my most prized possessions! I've had her for 25 years! She's worth a small fortune!

MONA. Maybe you can get her fixed.

PAUL. *(Practically howling.)* She can't be fixed! She's gone! My Epona! Gone!

MONA. Oh Paul. It's terrible that this happened, but it's just a thing. An object.

PAUL. *(Turning toward her with sudden cold anger.)* What do you know about it? This isn't just a thing. It's the past. It's something precious, something deep – and it's always alive for those of us perceptive enough to know it.

MONA. I don't know how to talk to you when you're like this.

PAUL. No, you don't know much, do you. You know why? You've always been an infant. Self-centered, neurotic, insecure, always mewling and crying about something you could have fixed years ago if you put your mind to it. Can't sing, can't get a job, can't go back to school to finish your degree – what exactly is it that you do all day?

MONA. Gee, I don't know. Please you?

PAUL. Well if that's the case, you're a failure at that too.

MONA. Oh really? Well let me ask you this. If I'm such a complete fucking disaster, why the hell did you marry me?

PAUL. My Galahad complex has always been my downfall. And watch your language! *(He walks to the bedroom, cradling statue. Suddenly there's red light on the opposite edge of the stage. Mystery Woman appears fleetingly, accompanied by the sounds of a haunting Celtic dirge. Music gets louder and louder as Mona stands transfixed. Mystery Woman disappears. The music rises. Perhaps there's smoke.)*

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