

SLEEPING BEAUTY

Written by

Julia Leigh

INT. CAMPUS - MEDICAL SCIENCE LAB - DAY

A large medical science lab - a teaching facility on campus. Rows and rows of benches. A STUDENT DOCTOR, kind and courteous, wholesome mid-20's, in a white lab coat and jeans, t-shirt, is waiting. He has set up his experiment: implements at the ready. Plastic tubing, a small rubber balloon.

He checks his watch.

He fusses around. He puts on a pair of thin white rubber gloves, takes a seat.

A long wait: he stretches the fingertips of the rubber gloves. Impatient, he goes to stand but on second thoughts he settles back down.

Finally LUCY enters, unapologetic. She is 23; she wears flat knee-high boots, a shortish skirt and a casual top. Minimal grooming. Self-possessed.

STUDENT DOCTOR

Hey.

LUCY

Hey.

STUDENT DOCTOR

Your autograph please.

He presents her with a clipboard and she signs the clearance without bothering to read it.

LUCY

Sure.

He shows her into the seat. He fits the rubber balloon to the end of the snaking plastic tube. He hands it to her.

STUDENT DOCTOR

Thanks for this.

She opens her mouth and tips back her head. She holds the balloon above her open mouth and after a few seconds she swallows it: he hovers over her, guiding the tube.

This disquieting experiment is in real-time.

STUDENT DOCTOR

Good, that's it. Good. OK.

He clips the end of the tube to a machine and takes a measurement.

Then he unclips the tube; he picks up a syringe and very carefully pushes some air down the tube.

STUDENT DOCTOR

I'm pushing the air in now. Just a little. So the pressure in your chest will change.

He clips off the tube and reconnects it to the machine to take a second measurement.

He unclips. With great care he slowly pushes in more air with the syringe.

STUDENT DOCTOR

You're doing a great job.

She slowly blinks in acknowledgement.

INT. CAMPUS - WOMEN'S TOILET- DAY

Lucy is in the public women's toilet. She is drinking water out of the tap, gargling so as to soothe her throat. Another student enters, with a bottle of water, and this student begins to apply lipstick. Lucy continues to drink water out of the tap.

INT. CORRIDOR/LECTURE THEATRE ENTRANCE - DAY

Lucy leaves the toilets and walks along the corridor. This is an ugly campus (UNSW).

A large group of students, many Asian, are patiently funnelling through the entry of the lecture theatre. She joins them. A ubiquitous surveillance camera is perched above the door.

There is a pile of student newspapers on the ground; she picks one up on her way past.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Lucy is clearing the tables at the restaurant. There are no plates or glasses. She patiently removes a tablecloth and throws it onto the floor in the centre of the room. She quickly windexes the tabletop and gives it a wipe. She tips the chairs upside down onto the table: it is the end of the night.

She clears a second table.

She clears a third table. She works quickly and efficiently.

The COOK - 20's, male - comes out of the kitchen.

COOK

Need a ride?

LUCY
(continuing her clearing)
No thanks, think I'll do the
drycleaners.

COOK
Seek Help.

LUCY
Aye aye me hearty. Night.

COOK
See ya.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Lucy, in red lipstick, is sitting at the bar amidst a swarm of businessmen in expensive suits. The place is fashionably decorated, moneyed. She is nursing a beer.

A WOMAN in her 40's, in a stylish pants suit, silk shirt, large breasts, short hair, serious jewellery, manicure, comes to join her at the bar. They acknowledge each other with quick smiles.

WOMAN
Can I interest you in a line?

LUCY
Why not.

The woman gets up and heads for the Ladies' Restroom.

Lucy follows.

INT. LADIES RESTROOM - NIGHT

They squeeze into the same cubicle. A strong sexual tension. The woman deftly racks up two generous lines on top of the silver toilet-paper dispenser. She rolls up a bank-note and snorts.

Lucy goes next.

Instead of returning the rolled-up note she openly pockets it.

LUCY
Thanks.

The woman steadily returns the direct gaze.

WOMAN
A pleasure.

INT. BAR - BANQUETTES - NIGHT

The woman slides onto a velvet banquette in a private alcove. Lucy follows. Each holds two balloons of brandy. Sitting opposite are two BUSINESSMEN in their 40's. Ties loosened.

WOMAN

This is Lucy.

BUSINESSMAN 1

Hi Lucy. Lucy in the sky.

BUSINESSMAN 2

We've just been talking about which one of us is going to fuck you.

LUCY

Oh really. (Long pause). Why don't you toss for it?

The businessmen are surprised but delighted. Man 2 fumbles for a coin.

BUSINESSMAN 2 (TO WOMAN)

Are you in?

The woman shakes her head. She is slightly miffed that the young Lucy is the beacon for sexual attention.

BUSINESSMAN 2 (TO BUSINESSMAN 1)

Heads or tails?

BUSINESSMAN 1

Head.

Man 2 flips coin over and over - builds anticipation - then tosses. They all lean forward to see the result.

BUSINESSMAN 2

Cunt!

BUSINESSMAN 1

(jubilant, sweeping up the coin)

Head it is.

LUCY

Yes, my prince. But did I say when. Did I say tonight, this year, next year...

BUSINESSMAN 1

Fair enough. We'll toss. Tonight - or next year. (He plays with the coin). Tonight - Head.

He tosses the coin. It lands on heads.

BUSINESSMAN 2 (TO LUCY)
Tonight.

BUSINESSMAN 1
My lucky night.

LUCY
Now - or in five hours?

She directs a complicit glance toward the woman.

BUSINESSMAN 1
OK. Now.....tails.

He tosses the coin again. They inspect the fall.

LUCY
Tails never fails.

Man 1 stands to his feet.

BUSINESSMAN 1
Right. Let's go then, shall we.

He gathers his coat and briefcase. Lucy smiles and accompanies him without protest.

EXT. BAR/STREET - NIGHT

They stand outside the bar waiting for a cab.

BUSINESSMAN 1
(kindly)
We don't have to go through with this. I can pour you into a cab.

LUCY
I want to.

INT. STUDENT TERRACE HOUSE - HALL - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Lucy opens the front door: this requires concentration. Her key ring holds numerous keys and has a distinctive key-tag. She walks down the corridor, into the living room. The living room abuts an open kitchen. Ratty student furnishings. Windowfuls of morning light. She is wearing the clothes from the night before; her hair is mussed. Two flatmates, SHELL and CHRIS, girlfriend and boyfriend, are eating breakfast. She seems to have interrupted them. They are dressed in cutting-edge fashion.

LUCY
Hi.

SHELL

Hi.

Chris just nods.

Lucy goes to the fridge. The shelves have names: "Shell & Chris". "Lucy". Lucy's shelf is almost bare. A jar of anchovies. A small container of cream, yellowed at the edges. A tin of chickpeas. She closes the fridge and picks up an apple in a fruit bowl on the bench. Behind her on the wall is a magnetic strip which holds several large sharp knives.

Shell and Chris swap glances. He raises his brows. Shell frowns as if to say 'shut up'.

CHRIS

Have you got the rent?

LUCY

The rent?

CHRIS

The rent. As in: the rent. The rent is due. The rent is overdue.

LUCY

It won't kill them to wait.

CHRIS

You have no idea. It's her house.

LUCY

(to Shell) Is it your house?

Shell shrugs.

LUCY (CONT'D)

(to Chris) It's her parents' house. There's no virtue in being born.

CHRIS

Just pay the fucking rent and while you're at it clean the fucking bathroom. As we all agreed (to Shell). It's your turn (back to Lucy).

LUCY

I did clean it.

CHRIS

You have to grout.

Lucy, stone-faced, doesn't seem to know what 'grout' means.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Grout. Between the tiles. That
black stuff.

LUCY
(self-possessed)
It will give me great pleasure to
grout.

INT. STUDENT TERRACE HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Lucy, still dressed in clothes from the night before, wearing pink rubber gloves, is barefoot in the bath and is patiently and determinedly rubbing away at the mould between the tiles: grouting.

Now and then she picks up an anti-mould spray and sprays the tiles. Returns to grouting.

She displays no frustration or anger but instead an equanimity. A long boring job.

INT. STUDENT TERRACE HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

The bed is a low futon on milk crates; another milk-crate serves as a bedside table. It holds a frangi-pani flower in a small glass of water and an eye-mask, the kind found in an airline toiletries bag. The spartan room is strewn with clothes, empty coffee cups, junk.

Lucy enters. She dumps her boots.

She sits on the edge of the bed and puts on the airline eye-mask.

Still dressed, she sprawls out, belly down. She does not move an inch. She sleeps.

EXT. TERRACE BACKYARD - LANEWAY - MORNING

A new day. The concrete backyard of a student terrace. Lucy walks out the back door and into the laneway. Lucy is freshly dressed, has redone her hair. Her walk is steady, self-possessed. She is wearing head-phones.

A tree overhangs a back-fence, laden with red berries. As she walks past - but without stopping - she reaches out and grabs a fistful of berries.

As she continues her long walk she scatters these berries one by one on the macadam.

A dead bat clings to a powerline: she aims a berry in its direction.

The laneway ends in an onslaught of heavy traffic: she faces an overwhelming transverse eight lanes of cars, morning rush.

INT. PHOTOCOPY ROOM - DAY

A large artificially-lit room devoted to photocopying - a super-machine. She is processing a stack of papers ...unpicking staples, running the documents through the machine, restacking. Methodical and seemingly endless Sisyphean work. She is wearing headphones. There is a small surveillance camera perched high in one corner of the room.

Page after page runs through the machine. Copy after copy after copy. Repetition.

Inexplicably the photocopier makes a crunching noise and jams. This does not phase her in the slightest. She has to open the machine and look through every part of it to find the scrunched document. She removes the toner cartridge and reaches into the machine, gently easing out a document folded like a concertina. She closes the machine and is patiently trying to smooth out the document when - behind her - a YOUNG COLLEAGUE enters the room. He is about her age, mid-20's, and is wearing a smart suit and tie: her superior. He is carrying a huge stack of manila folders.

COLLEAGUE

Lucy. (Louder) Lucy.

He fails to get her attention and so he puts the folders down on the table and goes to stand nearby. He is about to touch her on the shoulder but thinks better of it and instead waves his hand in front of her face.

She turns to face him.

COLLEAGUE

(pointing to the
documents)

Can you do them by 11.00

LUCY

Sure.

The colleague leaves.

She carries on with her photocopying.

There is another interruption - this time by a SECOND COLLEAGUE, a woman, 50's, whose enormous collagen-plumped lips are further enhanced by bright red lipstick.

COLLEAGUE 2

Lucy!

Lucy can't hear or see her - as her back is to the door. The woman flicks the lights on and off in order to get Lucy's attention. Lucy turns around.

COLLEAGUE 2
Lucy. Telephone. Your mother.

Lucy calmly removes her headphones.

INT. CORRIDOR/OFFICE - DAY

Lucy follows Colleague 2 down the corridor, past a warren of offices. The woman holds open the door to a room and points to the telephone.

COLLEAGUE 2
Line three.

LUCY
Thank you.

The woman stands outside the room so as to afford some measure of privacy - but the door remains open and she is clearly eavesdropping.

LUCY (ON TELEPHONE)
Hello.

Hi Mum.

How did you get this number?

No.

No.

No.

Do you want me to lose this job?

Alright. I have the card in my hand. Visa. 4564 3185 1970. Expiry 04/12.

What?

Yes, I can see it. Security code 399. Alright? I have to go now.

I'm sure. I really have to go.
Don't worry.

Ok. Goodbye. Bye Mum. Bye.

Note: she has no credit-card in her hand.

She puts down the phone and leaves the room. Passes the colleague. They make eye-contact. Lucy's gaze is direct, challengingly unashamed. Neither says anything. Lucy walks away.

INT/EXT. BOTTLE-O - STREET - DAY

Lucy is at the Bottle-O. She has a small plastic bag full of packets of muesli slung around one wrist: her own knapsack hangs over her shoulder. The ATTENDANT, 18, is putting four bottles of vodka and a six-pack of beer into a cardboard box. He has a temporary tattoo of a beer logo on his forehead.

ATTENDANT

You'll be right to carry this?

LUCY

Yeah, fine thanks.

ATTENDANT

Cash or credit.

LUCY

Credit.

She hands him a credit card.

ATTENDANT

There's a charge with Amex.

LUCY

That's OK. All I've got.

ATTENDANT

No worries.

He generates the paperwork. She signs the receipt.

ATTENDANT

Have a good one.

LUCY

Ta.

She walks out, loaded with the heavy box and the muesli.

She walks determinedly along the pavement.

Coming toward her, walking slowly, is a HUMAN BILLBOARD. A man wearing a sandwich board with advertising for an electrical goods outlet. The sandwich board incorporates a small sound-system which plays a constant advertising jingle. Hell.

They bear toward one another.

As they pass, the human billboard averts his eyes.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE ENTRANCE/ STAIRWAY- DAY

This is a boarding house for men. The bare entrance hall has no security. Lucy enters - we see an old man watching her from the stairwell. She climbs a set of grimey stairs to the first floor.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE LANDING/BIRDMANN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Lucy goes to the door - No.7 - and does a secret knock.

Tap, tap-tap, tap-tap, tap.

She puts her ear to the door to hear if anyone is moving, then she waits patiently.

After a long while the door opens. BIRDMANN, early 30's, is in advanced stages of alcoholism: he is very thin, with grey pallor, his hands have a slight tremble. He is dressed in a dark grey business suit with an immaculate white shirt. His hair is neat and combed. He is clean-shaven although he has a few shaving cuts. He has a gentle manner.

BIRDMANN

Hello Lucy. Come in.

LUCY

(warmly, so happy to see
him)

Hey Birdmann. I bear gifts.

He holds the door open and she walks into his bed-sit. Though bare, it is very clean and neat. The bed has been made. She opens a cupboard and a tiny kitchen is revealed: two electric burners on top of a mini bar-fridge. A sink.

She dumps the vodka bottles in the sink. She rests the beer and groceries on the floor. Birdmann stands and watches; he has his hand on his side, elbow out - he is applying pressure to his painful kidney.

BIRDMANN

Thanks.

She looks to see what he is drinking. There is a large tumbler on the table, with a finger of vodka, clear as water. She opens one beer.

She retrieves a packet of muesli from the groceries bag. She quickly pours him a small bowl. She opens one of the bottles of vodka and splashes it in the bowl rather than milk. This is done with a minimum of fuss.

They sit next to one another on the small sofa. The TV is on so that a light jitters on their faces; the sound is turned down.

LUCY
(highly mannered)
Hello Birdmann, How Are You?

BIRDMANN
(also highly mannered)
Very Well Thank You, And You?

LUCY
Very Well Thank You. And How's The Family?

BIRDMANN
Oh Very Well, Thank You. And Yours?

LUCY
Oh Yes, Very Well.

BIRDMANN
Well, Well.

This deliberate ritualistic patter ends - they both know it be untrue.

BIRDMANN (CONT'D)
(now sincerely)
It's good to see you. You look beautiful.

LUCY
(sincerely)
Thanks.

BIRDMANN
I have something important to tell you.

She nods.

BIRDMANN (CONT'D)
Do you remember that time - on the beach. After we'd been to Andy's place. That morning. I wanted to kiss you. You must have wanted me to kiss you. But I couldn't because of my tongue. My tongue was furred. Furred and thick. Putrid. The arsehole of the arsehole of the arsehole. I couldn't kiss you.

LUCY
That's OK.

BIRDMANN

I wanted you to know.... I just
want to love my friends.

LUCY

I know. Not an unreasonable
request.

She gives him a gentle friendly kiss on the cheek.

BIRDMANN

(taking a drink)
I'm so fucking tired of watching
Oprah.

EXT. PUBLIC TELEPHONES - DUSK

Later that day Lucy walks past a bank of public telephones. Out of instinct she checks each phone for loose change: she salvages a few coins. She carries on.

She pauses. She digs into her knapsack and finds the student newspaper. She backtracks to the phones. She flicks through the paper until she finds the page she wants. Dials a number from the untraceable public phone.

LUCY

Hello. This is Melissa. I'm calling
about the ad in the student
paper....Yes.....Five foot 7
....Brunette.....Slim.....Yes....
Yes....No, not that I
know....Yes.....12B.....Pert (eyes
roll)....I understand. What should
I wear?.....Alright. Thank you so
much. I look forward to seeing
you.....Bye.

EXT. LANEWAY - MORNING

The next morning Lucy is walking down the laneway. Self-assured, seemingly in good spirits. Today she has made an effort with her grooming. She is wearing more make-up. Her hair swings shiny and clean. She is wearing a dress and high heels.

As before, she takes a handful of berries and bounces them in her palm, playfully scatters them one at a time.

She looks up to see if the dead bat is still there: it is. She aims a berry in its direction.

EXT. TRAIN STATION

Lucy - in her dress and heels - exits a train station. She hovers around the ticket barriers, at the furthest distance from the guard. The other departing passengers file past with their tickets in hand. Businessmen, old ladies... When she sees a teenage guy about to go through - his ticket at the ready - she quickly steps in, pushes through behind him. He turns around.

LUCY

(smiling brightly)

Sorry.

GUY WITH TICKET

No worries.

They quickly go their separate ways.

INT. DECORATOR'S SHOWROOM - DAY

This is an elegant interior decoration showroom: there is a chandelier; a dove-grey chaise longue littered with swathes of rich furnishing fabrics; a pair of stone urns; Japanese silk-screens; a collection of antler trophies on the wall. It is not at all gaudy. A tone of refinement.

Lucy is sitting on a Louis XV sofa. An immaculately groomed, effeminate man with shaped eyebrows, THOMAS, 30, sits behind an antique desk doing some paperwork. On the wall behind him hangs an elaborate gilt-framed antique mirror. He stands and walks over to her.

THOMAS

Are you sure you wouldn't like a
tea or coffee. Water?

LUCY

I'm fine, thank you.

He returns to the desk. Lucy idly leafs through one of the "World of Interior" magazines on the low table beside her. A phone rings at the reception desk.

THOMAS

(listening a while before
speaking)

Yes, I think we are ready.

He puts down the phone and nods to Lucy. She stands. He shows her through a door at the back of the room.

INT. DECORATOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Lucy enters the office: it is chic and refined. An orchid on the table. A small archaic Greek statue. She is greeted by CLARA, a supremely elegant woman in her late 50's. She wears her hair in a glossy chignon. A pale-hued dress and jacket. Pearls. Once she would have been a great beauty. She seems kind, gentle: dignified resignation.

CLARA

Hello, hello, please come in, sit down.

Lucy take a seat. She notices the antique mirror that hung in the reception room works two-ways.

LUCY

Thank you.

CLARA

Thank you for coming. Such a pleasure to see such a unique beauty. Let me tell you how I think we should proceed. I will describe the job and then, if you are interested, we will discuss particulars. How does that sound?

LUCY

Yes, good.

CLARA

We are looking for a silver-service waitress to work at private functions - in lingerie we will supply. You will work with other girls, some of whom will have more responsibilities. There is room for promotion. The pay is \$250 an hour, cash. You will be engaged on a freelance basis - job by job. Either of us can stop our arrangement at any time - so please be sure to maintain another, more reliable, source of income.

LUCY

I understand.

CLARA

We rely on mutual trust and discretion - and I'm obliged to tell you that there are heavy penalties - very heavy penalties - for any breaches of discretion.

LUCY

OK.

CLARA

My sincere advice is to use the money wisely. Think of it as a windfall. Pay off your student loan. Or save for a home-deposit. Please - please do not see this as a career. Work hard for a short amount of time... Your vagina will not be penetrated. Your vagina will be a temple... So - there it is.

LUCY

My *vagina* is not a temple.

Clara is greatly pleased by this reply: a test has been passed.

CLARA

Excellent. Although it's quite true, my darling, you won't ever be penetrated. Now, will you stand up for me please and strip. (She picks up the phone). Thomas.

Lucy slips off her dress: we see the hem is held up by white masking tape. She stands in her underwear - bra and panties. Clara carries out a physical appraisal. She touches Lucy's hair.

CLARA

Open your mouth, darling.

She inspects her teeth.

She cups one breast, feels it's weight. Passes her thumb over the nipple.

CLARA

Not pierced.

Lucy shakes her head.

Thomas enters the room and stands close behind Lucy. Lucy is slightly apprehensive.

CLARA

No tattoos?

Lucy shakes her head.

CLARA

Good.

Clara tucks her hair behind an ear to reveal an injury: her right ear is deformed, the top has been sliced off and is scarred and mangled. Lucy registers this deliberate exposure.

THOMAS

Stand your feet apart a few inches.

He gets down on his knees, still behind her, and runs his hands lightly along her ankles, calves, thighs, right up her inner thighs. He pauses.

THOMAS

What's this?

He turns out her inner thigh.

LUCY

I had a mole removed.

Clara takes a close look at the faint scar, makes no comment. Then the inspection is over.

THOMAS

Please, get dressed.

Lucy dresses. Clara returns behind her desk. Thomas stands nearby.

CLARA

Sit down. I have some questions I need to ask you. Are you on any medication?

LUCY

Just the pill.

CLARA

That's all? No allergies? Not anti-depressants?

LUCY

No.

CLARA

No Prozac - Effexor?

LUCY

No.

CLARA

Are you a smoker?

LUCY

No. Maybe the occasional jazz cigarette. Rarely.

CLARA

Other drugs? Anything at all toxic?

LUCY

No. Never.

CLARA

Why not? Throughout history humankind have used drugs. Drugs are a form of grace, aspirin for the soul.

LUCY

My mother is an alcoholic with a violent temper. She runs an astrology hot-line.

CLARA

(not missing a beat)

We have a doctor we'd like you to see, for blood tests. Will that be a problem?

LUCY

That's fine.

CLARA

You called us on a public telephone. Do you have a mobile?

LUCY

Yes.

CLARA

Good. We will give you a credit-card for all your expenses - work-related expenses. Now, silver-service. You are familiar with silver-service?

LUCY

Yes

CLARA

From which side does one serve the fish?

LUCY

(micro-pause)

The right side.

CLARA

Left side. Thomas, take note. Thomas is going to help you.

CLARA (cont'd)

You are very beautiful, very talented, but we are going to make you even more beautiful, more talented. (To Thomas) Aren't we?

Thomas nods.

CLARA

Oh - your name. We'd like to call you Sara.

INT. BEAUTY SALON - DAY

Lucy is sitting high on the pedicure throne at the beauty salon. A Korean woman - wearing thin white rubber gloves and a white face mask over her mouth - is bathing Lucy's feet, performing a pedicure. Subservience.

Lucy's hands are on display - her fingernails have just been painted a purple-red.

It is the first time Lucy has had a pedicure and she is not familiar with procedure. The beautician readies a towel and waits for Lucy to take her foot out of the water for drying.

When this doesn't happen the beautician takes hold of the foot herself, smiling and nodding, showing Lucy what to do.

INT. WAXING SALON - DAY

Lucy is lying on a trestle table, wearing a shirt and panties. Her arms are crossed over her chest. The door opens and a beautician enters: a matronly Arabic woman in her 50's.

The beautician points at the panties and indicates to Lucy that they should come off.

The beautician goes to a workbench and returns with a ball of sticky-stretchy sugar taffy. To begin she reassuringly places a hand on Lucy's belly.

BEAUTICIAN

OK. Good girl.

Then she stretches the taffy and presses it onto Lucy's pubic hair -- then she rips it away.

LUCY

Ow!

BEAUTICIAN

Would you like a lavender tissue, darling?

Lucy nods. The beautician gets a kleenex tissue and sprays it with lavender essence. She deposits the snowy-white tissue over Lucy's nose.

The procedure is repeated, over and over. Each time Lucy cries out - Ow! The taffy is stretched and balled; stretched and balled. The beautician continues, working quickly, smiling and indulging Lucy's complaints. The ridiculous kleenex tissue has fallen away. Lucy grows hysterical with laughter - as if she can't believe the pain.

The beautician lifts both Lucy's knees and works right between Lucy's legs, removing every last trace of hair with the viscous ball of pubic-studded taffy. Lucy falls silent and shuts her eyes - on the next rip she turns her head to the side.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE LANDING/BIRDMANN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Lucy does the secret knock at Birdmann's door:

Tap tap-tap tap-tap -

But before she finishes the door opens wide.

BIRDMANN
Good Afternoon.

LUCY
Good Afternoon.

She gives him a peck on the cheek, then passes down the hallway, headed straight for the kitchenette. She carries a plastic bag filled with two bottles of vodka and takeaway food containers.

BIRDMANN
And How Are You?

LUCY
Oh Very Well Thank You. And You.

BIRDMANN
Oh Yes Fine Thank You.

LUCY
OK, sit down. At the table.

He gingerly takes a seat at the little table, wincing in pain. She brings over a fistful of mismatched cutlery, a nest of mismatched plates. A couple of wine glasses. She quickly sets the table-for-two.

BIRDMANN
To what do I owe this pleasure?

LUCY

Nothing. Nothing special. I'm
'upgrading my skillset'.

She stands beside him with a newly opened bottle of vodka.

BIRDMANN

(Pause)

Nothing special?

Lucy shakes her head, avoiding the question. He accepts this.

LUCY

White or white?

She pours the vodka into the glass, from the correct height and twisting the bottle at the final moment so as not to spill a drop. She puts down the bottle and then opens the takeaway food containers. She grips a fork and spoon in one hand, and holding the container in the other hand as if it were a platter, she successfully transfers some food onto his plate in a dextrous silver-service fashion. After she has served him she serves herself...showing off her new skills by shuffling her food around the plate. Birdmann observes, impressed. She sits down. They both look at the unappetising food.

LUCY

Go on, you first.

He manoeuvres a mouthful, chews slowly.

BIRDMANN

Can we watch some porn?

LUCY

No.

BIRDMANN

OK. (He sips his drink.) What have you done to your fingers?

She puts down her cutlery and contemplates her shiny lacquered nails. She places her fingertips on the table, then scuttles her nails up onto the plate, over the food, across the table. A staccato assault. They both study these fingers that appear to have a life of their own and then comment, at the same time:

LUCY AND BIRDMANN

Beetles.

A small shared smile acknowledging this moment of unexpected unison.

EXT. LANEWAY - NIGHT

The back gate opens and Lucy walks down the laneway. With confidence. She is wearing high heels, a coat. Glamorous make-up, glossy smooth hair: a beauty.

She grabs the berries - as is her habit. Lets them drop.

Up ahead we see a car waiting at the spot where the dead bat hangs in the power-lines. A swarthy bull-necked man, her DRIVER, is leaning against the driver door. As he sees her coming he makes call on a mobile phone to confirm her arrival.

DRIVER

Sara?

She nods.

He holds open the backseat door for her.

They drive away.

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT - ENTRANCE/BEDROOM/KITCHEN - NIGHT

The doors of an art-deco elevator open: Lucy steps out into the entrance hall of a grand apartment. Oak-panelled walls, parquet floor.

She is immediately greeted by a beautiful woman in her 30's, SOPHIE. Sophie wears a short black silk kimono - open. Under the kimono she is wearing a 1930's burlesque-style black suspender belt and black net stockings. No bra, no panties. Her hair is cropped short and she has a large tattoo over her left breast. Her style is suicide-girl.

SOPHIE

Hello Sara. I'm Sophie.

LUCY

Hi.

She quickly ushers Lucy down a corridor into a minimally furnished guest bedroom. The bed is loaded with coats and bags belonging to the staff.

Lucy unbuttons her coat and lays it on the bed. She slips off her dress. She is wearing a cream silk balconette bra, nipples exposed; cream silk panties that tie with satin ribbons at the side; cream silk suspender belt and cream silk stockings. Ultra-feminine.

SOPHIE

You look lovely.

LUCY

Thanks.

SOPHIE

OK now I need you to go into the ensuite and fix your make-up.
You'll find a lipstick palette in there and I want you to match - an exact match - match your lipstick to the colour of your labia.

Long pause.

LUCY

(muted disbelief)

You're kidding me.

Sophie shakes her head and indicates the direction of the ensuite bathroom.

Lucy goes into the bathroom and finds the palette. She leaves it alone and instead brushes her hair. She fixes her eyeliner. She studies the palette and then decides to apply the most lurid shade of pink possible.

She emerges and gazes directly at Sophie. Sophie is non-plussed and removes another palette from a pocket in her kimono.

SOPHIE

(gently)

It's not a game.

She approaches Lucy and quickly bends down, pulls aside the panties, has a good look, stands up, mixes her brush along the lip palette and then wipes away the lurid pink with the back of her hand and applies a new colour to Lucy's mouth. Lucy obliges.

They leave the room and Sophie leads the way down the corridor into a large kitchen. A male CHEF is working hard, stirring, blending. A sense of abundance. The other WAITRESSES - six of them - are sitting around, lounging against the benches. Each of these other waitresses are dressed in the same manner as Sophie: extraordinarily beautiful 20-something suicide-girls, pierced and tattooed, topless, no panties, black or red suspenders and stockings. They exude a languorous menace. They study Lucy: a bunny who has walked into a lion's den. One waitress whispers something to her friend, clearly something about Lucy. Ha. The friend gives a knowing laugh.

Sophie shucks off her kimono. She gently adjusts the hair of one of her girls. She checks her watch.

SOPHIE
 (chiefly to Lucy)
 Let's go.

The waitresses stand to the ready.

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A sumptuous dining room. A glittering chandelier. An elaborately laid table, set for seven places, now empty. Cut crystal glasses. An oak buffet. Abundant flowers. The feel of a gentleman's club, a Helmut Newton room. Lucy and Sophie are stationed on either of the buffet, patient and poised.

The sound of approaching footsteps.

Lucy takes a deep breath, she adjusts her bra strap.

A pair of French double-doors is opened wide and one by one the diners slowly file in, take their respective places. A ceremonial procession.

The diners: these men are all late 60's or older. Silver-haired. Among them is one old butch dyke. One man has trouble walking - he is truly ancient. They wear formal black and white dinner suits. Wealth. Power.

Once the diners are seated Lucy steps forward to serve MAN 1 who presides at the head of the table. He is thin and kindly-faced, patrician. She expertly displays the wine bottle and pours a glass of white wine. He sniffs the wine, then nods and smiles in thanks.

She works her way around the table - to the appreciation of the diners.

Once everyone has a full glass a toast is made.

MAN 1
 Thank you, friends, for being here
 tonight. As ever it is wonderful to
 see you. Thank you.

Murmured appreciations. Cheers.

Sophie steps forward.

SOPHIE
 Tonight's entree is Le Foie Gras
 poelee, Puree d'Ail et de Citron

A door opens and three waitresses stream in, each balancing two entrees. A balletic serving performance. They begin to eat.

BUTCH

Ah my favourite. You are too kind, too kind. It's remarkable: where do your source your supplies?

She turns to Lucy and indicates she'd like a top-up of wine.

MAN 1

Ways and means, ways and means.

Sophie takes a stool and sits by the ancient man (who has not touched his food).

Lucy watches mesmerised as Sophie begins to spoonfeed him like a baby.

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The CHEF is putting the finishing touches to the main course. He wipes around edges of each platter with a damp cloth.

Three waitresses (Group A) don't lift a finger to help.

Three waitresses (Group B) enter with finished entree plates that they dump on a bench.

When the Chef is satisfied the Group A waitresses line up to take out the next course.

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Lucy serves a red wine: one glass after the other.

SOPHIE

Tonight we are serving fricassee de poulet aux morilles Michel.

MAN 3

(to MAN 1)

Michel. Do we know Michel?

No-one seems to know.

MAN 1

Michel Hennekine, the chef at Jamin. Two Michelin stars. In Paris. My wife and I had our thirtieth anniversary there. A memorable night. I haven't tried the dish since then - and was wondering whether I ever should - but tonight I asked Tony to do what he could.

MAN 1 (cont'd)

Perhaps you will be able to tell me
if it really does taste so good or
if it is the memories of Elizabeth
that make it so special.

MAN 3

(half-heartedly)

To the dish itself.

The others are in agreement though they pick up their cutlery
as if it weighs very heavy.

The waitresses have been making sure everyone has their main
course. They serve each individual in the silver-service
style: first from the rice platter, then from the chicken
fricassee platter, then from the morel sauce jug.

Lucy continues her pouring: she doesn't spill a drop.

Finished, she resumes her station. She swaps a quick glance
with Sophie. Sophie gives her a reassuring tiny nod.

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The Chef is preparing an elaborate dessert.

He allows one of the waitresses a sample tasting.

He holds out one sweetened finger.

She licks its length and then takes it whole in her mouth as
if giving a blow-job.

INT. APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The desert has been demolished.

MAN 1 places his linen serviette on the table and slowly
stands. The others follow suit.

Sophie opens the French double-doors. A living-room area is
revealed. Leather club couches and velvet upholstered wing
chairs. Persian rugs. Paintings on the wall. A luxurious and
refined environment. Two girls we haven't seen before -
suicide-girls in leather collars- are kneeling over low
velvet footstools, facing a fireplace. Their exquisite naked
arses are on display.

The diners take up their seats. Sophie and Lucy and the
waitresses enter the room.

The waitresses station themselves around the room. Sophie
goes to a side-table and passes Lucy a silver tray bearing a
crystal decanter and brandy balloons. Sophie herself then
takes up a second tray which bears a silver coffee pot and
coffee cups. Sophie approaches a diner.

SOPHIE
Coffee or brandy?

With a wave of the hand the diner indicates he will take both. Sophie pours a hot black coffee and knows exactly how much milk and sugar to add. Lucy, on the other side, pours brandy into the glass balloon.

They approach the next guest.

SOPHIE
Coffee or brandy?

The process is repeated.

A waitress is summoned from her station and is instructed by MAN 3 to sit close by him, on the edge of the leather sofa. She obeys without question. He runs his fingers up and down her spine. She arches her back in cat-like response, breasts forward.

Once Sophie and Lucy have finished serving the drinks they prepare to leave the room. Sophie walks ahead.

As Lucy walks past MAN 2 - a strong man, barrel-chested with a big gut - he deliberately sticks out his foot and trips her. She tumbles to the floor - but does not make a sound: all eyes on Lucy. Crash: the crystal decanter is shattered.

MAN 1 gets up from his seat and helps her to her feet. His opportunity to touch her.

MAN 1
There, there. Not to worry. Upsie
getsy.

Lucy is upset, flummoxed, humiliated but under Sophie's stern gaze she says nothing. Her eyes shine with tears. They leave the room.

A waitress moves over to collect the broken crystal. This is no scandal: with the fireplace metal dustpan and poker calmly in hand we feel she has seen this all before.

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sophie and Lucy return to the kitchen with their trays. The CHEF is carefully wiping down his knives.

LUCY
I'm sorry.

SOPHIE
Don't worry. You did well.

Lucy goes to the sink and turns on the tap, makes to wash the dishes.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
Leave those for the cleaners.

She goes to a drawer and pulls out an envelope. She hands this over to Lucy.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
We won't be needing you anymore
tonight.

INT - STUDENT TERRACE HOUSE - HALLWAY - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lucy comes home to a dark empty house. There is a folded note "Lucy" on the table. She reads it and frowns, crumples it up.

In a drawer in the TV cabinet she finds a pouch of pot and some rollies. She expertly rolls herself a spliff. She lights it and inhales.

She takes the pay envelope from her coat pocket. Feels its weight. She opens it and empties out the \$50 bills.

She fashions a neat stack of bills, then peels off the top bill.

She flicks her cigarette lighter with her manicured nail and applies a steady flame to the bill she has set aside.

It gives her deep pleasure to be able to destroy it, watch the plasticised money shrivel and burn.

INT. PHOTOCOPY ROOM - DAY

Lucy is back at her photocopy job, patiently feeding documents through the machine.

This is long boring repetitive work that she performs with equanimity. However, not complete equanimity: she takes a deep sigh and presses her thumbs against her eyeballs.

She uses the unpicker to remove staples from some papers. The staples are tricky to remove. We see her chipped scrappy nailpolish, the very last remnants of the manicure.

Her colleague enters with a new folder. It's the woman with the enormous collagen-plumped reddened lips, COLLEAGUE 2. She slams down the folder to get Lucy's attention.

The moment she has left the room Lucy retrieves the folder. She smacks her lips together and then says loudly, clearly, with hyper-enunciation:

LUCY
Baboon.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Lucy gets on the train. She is casually dressed.

The compartment is almost full. There are three seats free. She looks down and sees someone has drawn a large cock and balls picture on one seat. She avoids this - and sits on the seat beside.

An old woman is sitting on the bench opposite. Her shin is bandaged. She stares at Lucy and offers a watery smile. Lucy does not return the smile.

A young mother and her child, age 5, also get on the train. Lucy is obliged to slide over onto the graffiti-marked seat. The mother sits down.

The child starts screaming, having an hysterical fit. He thumps and bangs the seat.

CHILD-TYRANT

I won't sit down! I won't sit down!
Stand up, Mummy! Stand up! Stand
up, Mummy! Mummy, stand up, Mummy!
Stand up!

Over and over and over. High pitched squealing. After one or two attempts to calm him the mother ignores the child.

The child pauses in his hysterical fit and sneaks Lucy a glance. The eye of the storm. Lucy regards him coldly. The fit resumes with even greater intensity. The child yanks at his mother's skirt.

CHILD-TYRANT

Stand up! Stand up, Mummy! Don't
sit down! Stand up Mummy! I won't
sit down!

The mother gives the child a hard slap across the face. A sudden quiet. The commuters continue to stare blank-faced and discomfited.

Lucy stands and moves away.

INT. SECOND APARTMENT - NIGHT

The elevator doors open. Lucy has arrived at a new luxury residence. She is in her coat and high heels.

As before, Sophie is waiting for her, dressed in her black silk kimono and black suspender belt. Her hair is a new colour, a platinum white.

SOPHIE

Hi.

LUCY

Hi.

Once again Sophie ushers Lucy into a bedroom that is used by staff as the cloakroom. On the way they cross paths with a suicide-girl WAITRESS from the previous dinner. She acknowledges Lucy with a friendly nod.

In the bedroom Lucy takes off her coat, then her dress. We see she is wearing a new lingerie ensemble: a pale pink lace-trimmed balconette bra, pale pink stain panties that tie at the side, pale pink suspender belt and cream stockings. Once again, ultra-feminine.

SOPHIE

Very beautiful.

LUCY

You look good. Your hair looks great.

SOPHIE

Oh. Ta.

Sophie gestures with an invisible lipstick.

Lucy goes to the bathroom and does her make-up, quickly applying a natural shade of lipstick.

SOPHIE

It gets a little easier. But it's never easy.

Lucy nods in appreciation.

LUCY

How long have you been doing this?

Sophie gives her a long hard stare.

SOPHIE

What sort of question is that?

Lucy realises her gaff.

LUCY

Sorry.

EXT. CAR/CITY STREET- NIGHT

Lucy is in the back of the car, being driven by her allocated driver.

She toys with the envelope of cash in her hand.

LUCY

Just at the corner, thanks.

DRIVER

No problem, darl.

The car pulls over. Lucy gets out. She waits for the car to disappear out of sight before she turns in the other direction.

She walks along the street until she reaches the moneyed bar, her haunt.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Lucy makes a noticeable entrance and without hesitation orders herself a drink.

Soon she is joined by a businessman, tie loosened.

BUSINESSMAN

May I?

LUCY

Be my guest.

BUSINESSMAN

Some people fake their deaths - I'm faking my life.

LUCY

You're doing a good job.

He raises his glass to her; she raises hers. She studies him closely. She is full of indiscriminate love so appears warm, loving, friendly.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I have something to show you.

She inches up her dress and reveals the top of her stockings.

The businessman is impressed but is not lecherous.

LUCY (CONT'D)

(absolute sincerity)

I would really love to suck your cock.

He studies her: is she serious? Lucy nods in affirmation.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Say yes.

A slow smile spreads on the businessman's face.

BUSINESSMAN

Hallelujah.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE LANDING/ BIRDMANN'S APARTMENT- MORNING

Early the next morning Lucy is at Birdmann's door. She is wearing clothes from the night before; her hair is a mussed-up bird's nest.

She does the secret knock: tap, tap-tap, tap-tap, tap.

She puts her ear to the door. She repeats the secret knock, more quietly this time.

After a while the door opens. Birdmann is wearing pyjamas buttoned to the neck and a full-length dressing gown belted at the waist. On his feet: a garish pair of fluffy slippers.

BIRDMANN

Hello Lucy. What time is it?

LUCY

Morning.

She gives him a kiss on the cheek. They go into his room: the bed has been hastily made.

Birdmann steps into the toilet: we hear the sound of vomiting. He emerges as if nothing has happened.

BIRDMANN

Can I get you anything? Coffee?

LUCY

Coffee. Thanks.

He puts on an electric kettle.

She plonks down on the sofa.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Birdmann, will you marry me?

BIRDMANN

Yes.

LUCY

Thank you.

BIRDMANN

Not at all.

LUCY

That's very kind of you.

BIRDMANN

A pleasure.

They share a small gentle smile at what they both know to be untrue.

He spoons some instant coffee into a mug and adds boiling water, hands slightly trembling. He brings the coffee over to her, cupping it on both hands to hold it steady. Ta. He settles slowly onto the sofa, wincing at the pain in his side. There is a strong tenderness between them.

BIRDMANN

I'm ready, I think. I think I'm nearly ready.

LUCY

We could get you back into detox. I could. Me. I could, I'm flush.

BIRDMANN

Thank you. I don't think I'd make it this time....(long pause).

LUCY

(gentle)

I think you could.

BIRDMANN

Do you believe that?

LUCY

I don't know.

He turns on the TV and they snuggle together to watch the nature footage with the sound turned down.

We see the nature footage: a marsupial mouse blinking and hopping, looking direct to camera.

BIRDMANN (V.O.)

The Sandhill Dunnart. Nocturnal and endangered. A marsupial mouse. Thought to be extinct until recently. Its main predators include owls and bats. There is very little known about the animal due to its rarity.

BIRDMANN (cont'd)

It's only current known location is on the Eyre Peninsula - that's South Australia. Sandhill Dunnarts vary in colour from buff to gray, getting lighter down the sides of the body with white on the underside and feet. The animal prefers to eat insects but will also eat meat on occasion. Sharp carnivore's teeth. Due to it's reclusive nature very little is known about its feeding habits. Likewise, little is known about its reproductive cycle. A scared Sandhill Dunnart will make a loud noise as it moves into an offensive position. Behold -- sheer lifeforce. What it really is - the Sandhill Dunnart is a miniature and more tenacious Kangaroo.

This scene is a long interlude of uncomplicated lifeforce.

EXT. CAMPUS - CORRIDOR - AFTERNOON

Another day. Lucy - now in jeans, fresh-faced - is waiting outside the lecture theatre while the outgoing STUDENTS stream past.

One girl waves; she returns the wave.

Her phone rings. She checks to see who it is before she answers.

LUCY

Hey Thomas. Long time, no hear.

I'd be happy to do what I can. Try me.

I understand.

Sorry? (Brows raised in disbelief)

For how long?

That's it?

How much? (Again, brows raised.)

Smooth as a baby's bottom.

OK, yes, I understand. Bye.

She returns the phone to her jacket pocket. She quickly looks over her shoulder to see if anyone had been eavesdropping. No. She disappears into the theatre.

EXT. LANEWAY - MORNING

Lucy is walking confidently along the laneway; she is casually dressed. She has her knapsack with her. It is a clear blue-sky day.

Up ahead the driver - in sunglasses - waits in the pick-up spot.

She pulls off a handful of berries as she goes past the trees, scattering most as she walks along.

DRIVER

Morning.

LUCY

Hey.

He opens the door for her and she climbs aboard.

Inside, she opens her palm and deliberately lets the last red berries drop to the floor.

The driver activates the automatic door locks.

They drive away.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE/ INT. CAR - DAY

Lucy observes the countryside through the car window: this is a long drive.

Countryside: powerlines cut through swathes of green; filthy muddied sheep; abandonned vehicles; blackened trees with fine furry leaf-cover, post bushfire.

She leans forward as if to ask the driver a question: draws back.

On second thoughts she leans forward again.

LUCY

Can we stop at the next petrol station? I need to pee.

DRIVER

(long pause)

Of course.

She turns back to the countryside. Rests her cheek against the glass window.

EXT. GREAT GATEWAY - DRIVEWAY - MANSION - DUSK

As dusk falls they draw close to a great gateway. The iron-grille gate has a sophisticated electronic surveillance system. The driver removes his sunglasses and undergoes a scan of the iris.

The gates open and they pass through. They ascend a pebbled allée lined with linden trees.

A beautiful heritage mansion comes into view. An immaculately landscaped garden. A bucolic paradise.

There is another car parked in the circular driveway.

As Lucy gets out of her car she notices Thomas helping another GIRL - same looks and age as Lucy - toward the parked car. They seem to have come from around the side of the house. This girl can hardly stand. One arm is slooped around Thomas' shoulder. With a curt nod he acknowledges Lucy's arrival. He bundles the second girl into the car.

INT. MANSION - GRAND FOYER/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Now Lucy sees Clara emerge through the front door. As ever, she is impeccably dressed in a pale skirt and jacket, stockings, heels. Not a hair out of place. She discreetly raises a hand in welcome.

CLARA

Come in, come through. Thank you
for coming.

She shows Lucy through the house into a luxurious but austere living room.

CLARA

Welcome to my home. I hope the trip
wasn't too gruelling.

LUCY

No, it was fine, thank you.

CLARA

Wonderful. Perhaps a shower might refresh you after the long drive. There's a bathroom at the end of the corridor, on the left. You'll find a robe behind the door.

LUCY

Alright.

She heads down the corridor.

CLARA
 (afterthought)
 Oh - try not to let your hair get
 wet.

Lucy nods.

INT. MANSION - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Clara is sitting on a sofa. On the low table in front of her is a silver tray laden with an antique fine porcelain tea-set: a tea-pot, a cup, a saucer. There is also a slender silver whisk and a square of silk cloth on the tray. Clara is not doing anything at all: she sits perfectly still with her hands folded in her lap.

The sound of a door closing shut and Lucy returning to the room. Clara's expression does not change in the slightest. She remains implacable.

Lucy sits herself down nearby Clara. She, too, appears self-possessed, implacable. She is wearing a long silk kimono, tied at the waist. She deposits her incongruously ugly knapsack (filled with her clothes) by her barefeet. She takes a good long look at the tea-set.

LUCY
 I'm ready.

CLARA
 Are you feeling well?

LUCY
 Pardon.

CLARA
 Are you in good health?

LUCY
 I'm fine.

Clara is satisfied. With ceremonial grace she very slowly prepares a tea for Lucy. First she opens the tea-pot and stirs the tea with the whisk: a meditative movement performed with great concentration.

She returns the whisk to the tray and dries it carefully with the silk cloth. Folds the cloth.

She slowly pours the tea and then hands over the cup in a deferential manner.

CLARA
 You will go to sleep: you will wake
 up. It will be as if those hours
 never existed.

CLARA (cont'd)

You won't even dream. For an hour or two after you wake you will feel - yes, slightly groggy - and then - fine. Perfectly fine. Not nearly as bad as a hangover. Such a sleep works wonders. You will feel - Profoundly Restored.

Lucy listens and slowly sips her tea.

INT. SLEEPING BEAUTY CHAMBER - NIGHT

This is the Sleeping Beauty bedchamber. A spare and austere refinement. A low platform queen-size bed. A bedside table with a delicate lamp. No windows. Lucy is asleep, naked, under snowy-white sheets.

Two figures enter the room: Clara and the host of the first dinner party, MAN 1. They sit straight-backed at the end of the bed; Lucy lies between them. A formal composition.

MAN 1

Thank you, Clara.

Clara acknowledges his thanks with a small nod.

MAN 1

(addressing the camera)

A few months ago a strange thing happened. For the first time in - in a long time - I was idling through my bookshelves when - for no good reason - I noticed a book that I would have sworn didn't belong to me. I picked it up and soon discovered that yes, it was mine. It was mine because it bore a dedication from brother, he'd given it to me for my birthday. A collection of short stories. And what's more- I had definitely read it, once upon a time - even though I would have sworn I hadn't - because I saw I'd turned down a few pages, dog-eared them - the way I do when I'm working through something. Well, I started to reread one of the stories.

MAN 1 (cont'd)

It was about a year in the life of a man who one morning wakes up and can't bring himself to get out of bed...he shuts his eyes *in self-defence*...He re-evaluates his life, is seized by restlessness, he packs his bags and cuts all ties...He can no longer live among the people he knows, they paralyse him..He's moneyed, he goes to Rome...is generally tormented...He wants to burrow under the earth like a bulb, like a root...but even in Rome he can't escape people from his former life...He decides to return to the city where he was born and educated, where he pays taxes - but which he can't quite call home...but it all goes pear-shaped or I should say..remains pear-shaped...What does he do? He leaves town again, back to Rome. He desires an extreme solution to his conundrum...a desire to *act ruthlessly*...He aches for no less than a new world, a new language...Nothing changes. Out of indifference, exhaustion and because he can't think of anything better to do he decides to go back to his hometown. He abandons his train journey to do some hitching. A man picks him up, they ride off into the night until - bang - they smack into a wall. The driver dies, our man is hospitalised, broken up. Months pass - his wounds heal. Now he wishes for life. He has a confidence in himself, in things he doesn't have to prove - things like the pores in his skin, all things corporeal. He can't wait to get out of the hospital, away from the infirm and the moribund..."*I say unto thee rise up and walk, none of your bones are broken!*!"..The End. When I reread those words - hearing them with my inner ear or whatever inner faculty it is that we have for absorbing language - *I say unto thee rise up and walk, none of your bones are broken* - I felt a tremendous sadness. Do you know what the first line of the story is? "When a man enters his thirtieth year people will not stop calling him young." 30!

MAN 1 (cont'd)

I'd been given the book for my 30th birthday! "The Thirtieth Year" by Ingeborg Bachmann, an Austrian. So-I'd heard; I'd been told; I knew all along even if I didn't really know. The great true things are unsurprising...But what did I do back then? I carried on. I carried on dutifully. We were The Happy Couple, Elizabeth and I. That's how people saw us. But in truth I did not cherish my wife. And I didn't cherish my friends or even my children. I just - carried on. I was a success, I made my way but at each step I cringed...I was on the defensive, the back foot. And now - tonight I tell you, for all these years I've known you and now for the first time I say - my bones are broken. Broken. One day I will need your help... All of my bones are broken.

Clara, placid, lets this speech settle between them. Long pause.

CLARA

You are safe, there is no shame here. No-one will see you.

He nods.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Our rules must be respected. No penetration.

MAN 1

Thank you, Clara.

She gracefully stands and leaves the room.

He takes off his jacket. He unbuttons his shirt. White-wiry hair on his chest. A sack of loose skin. An old man.

He stands and unbuckles his belt. He removes his trousers. And then he removes his silk boxer shorts. Now he is completely and utterly naked. He sits close to the girl for a minute, feels the warmth of her leg through the sheets. Then he hauls himself onto the bed, under the sheets. He lies his full length against her. Holds her tight.

He pulls away from her and draws down the sheet to marvel at her beauty. He tenderly tucks a strand of hair behind her ear. He observes her closely; she moves a little to be more comfortable, an unconscious bodily adjustment that happens during sleep.

He kisses her on the back of the neck. Lucy remains in a deep sleep and does not respond.

He picks up a limp soft hand and holds it in his veined mottled old hand. He carefully kisses each finger, one by one. He venerates her beauty; he cherishes her.

MAN 1
My beauty, my dearest darling.

He begins to kiss her all over. All the way down her legs. He kisses her toes.

He gently rolls her onto her belly. At first she is face-down in the pillow - for a long moment - then he lifts her head and lays it one side on the pillow so that she can breathe.

He cups her arse in his hands. He lies down beside her and gently rubs one hand in the groove of her arse cheeks. A repetitive, meditative movement that brings him transcendental ecstatic peace.

EXT. MANSION DRIVEWAY - MORNING

The next morning Lucy is being helped by Thomas to walk from the house and into the parked car on the driveway. She is only slightly groggy, not staggering.

Clara watches from the doorway.

Her driver holds open the door.

She gets in, Thomas hands over her knapsack.

LUCY
(weak)
Thanks.

THOMAS
Take care. Safe trip. You'll feel better very soon.

Lucy grimaces like she doesn't believe him.

He shuts the door. The car pulls away.

Clara wanders over to Thomas. She waves goodbye to the disappearing car.

CLARA
Your instinct was right.

THOMAS
We'll see...the perfect sleeper.

Goodbye. The car disappears from view.

INT. STUDENT TERRACE HOUSE - KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lucy has arrived home to find another note left for her on the table. "LUCY". It pisses her off to see it there. She turns away to go to her room - leaving the note unread- then on second thought turns back and begins to read it.

Bad news. She lays down the piece of paper. Exhausted, she can't believe she has one more burden to bear.

Behind her, Chris appears at the entrance to the room. He watches her.

She turns to see him - surprised that he has been watching.

LUCY

You really are a fuckwit.

CHRIS

Two weeks then you're out. Adios
amigo.

LUCY

Que lo pario, la puta que le pario.
Vete a la mierde. Chinga tu madre.

CHRIS

Whatever.

Shell comes to stand beside him. She cups his elbow in a placatory gesture.

SHELL

(kindly to Lucy)

I'm really sorry.

LUCY

(conciliatory)

Me too.

INT. REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY

Lucy, dressed up in a conservative way, enters the small real estate office. A bell tinkles.

The AGENT is a jolly besuited man in his 30's, working at his desk behind the reception counter.

AGENT

Good morning.

LUCY

Hi.

She quickly scans through a list of rental properties. He leaves her to it.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Is this Excelon still available?

AGENT
That's right. Fan-tastic place.
Heart of the city, close to
everything. I have keys and can
show you if you'd like.

LUCY
Don't worry, I'm sure the Excelon
will be excellent.

AGENT
Right. But its better to see it.

LUCY
It's OK.

The agent studies her for a long moment.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I have a friend in the building.

AGENT
OK, sure, if that's the case we can
do that. No law against it. Buyer
beware and all that. So do you have
photo ID?

LUCY
Yes.

She fumbles in her bag and produces her wallet. She shows him the ID. He scrutinises it.

AGENT
Fan-tastic. There's some paperwork.
You know how it is, a stitch in
time saves nine.

Lucy pretends to be amused.

He takes out a lease form. Starts filling in a few details.

AGENT (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Lucy. Loocy. Lucy-loo. Skip to the
Loocy, my darling.

He interrupts this form-filling to ask:

AGENT (CONT'D)

I'll need your last two pay-slips.

Lucy hesitates. He holds his pen mid-air then puts it down. Gives her a querying look.

LUCY

I have independent means. Family.

AGENT

That's fine. Fine. We'll just need someone - Mum or Dad - to go guarantor.

Lucy reaches into her bag and pulls out a huge envelope of cash. She forks out a large wad, hands it over to him.

LUCY

I prefer to pay in cash. That's 3 months rent in advance.

The Agent looks at the cash. He counts it. He looks at her without saying anything, weighing his options, undecided.

Lucy forks over more cash - a substantial amount.

LUCY

Meet Daddy.

The Agent acquiesces, takes the money. The deal is done.

INT. BIRDMANNS' DOORWAY - DAY

Later that day Lucy is at Birdmann's door. She has bottles of vodka and a plastic bag of muesli slung around her wrist.

She does the secret knock: Tap, tap-tap, tap-tap, tap.

She waits.

She repeats the knock. Loud. Tap, tap-tap, tap-tap, tap.

She rests her cheek against the door, listens.

She knocks a third time, very gently: Tap, tap-tap, tap-tap, tap.

She waits and listens. Saddened.

She settles the bottles of vodka and bag of groceries outside the door.

Departs empty-handed.

INT. THE EXCELON- BEDROOM - NIGHT

The new modern bedroom. Halogen lights, mirrored built-ins. Sleek and sterile. Lucy is lying naked on her old futon, which is still propped up on milk-crates. Around the room are cheap brightly-chequered plastic bags full of unpacked clothes; an array of unpacked cardboard boxes: she has just moved in.

She lies still. Eyes open; eyes closed; eyes open She reaches across to switch on a lamp that sits on the carpeted floor.

She gets out of bed and rummages around in one of the plastic bags until she finds a pair of panties. She puts these on - as though they might afford her some protection.

She clammers back into bed and after a moment she deliberately pulls up the sheet to ensure her breasts are covered. There, now she is safe.

INT. PHOTOCOPY ROOM - DAY

Once more Lucy is patiently photocopying. Page after page after page. Repetition.

She goes over to the documents table and picks up a new pile of papers. Then she thinks better of it and puts down the papers. She takes out her mobile and makes a call. Returns to the machine with the papers, talking and copying at the same time.

LUCY

Hello Thomas, this is Sara.

Very well, thank you.

I was hoping Clara was out of her meeting.

Ok - Listen, Thomas, perhaps you can help me. The thing is I have a new lease and I need some work.

Thanks, if you could keep me in mind I'd be grateful.

OK, thanks Thomas, Bye.

That's done. Shhk, shhk, shhk: the machine collates a hundred copies.

INT. MEDICAL SCIENCE LAB - DAY

On another day Lucy is back in the medical science lab. She is in the chair with the plastic tube running from deep in her chest to the machine. The student doctor is taking a pressure measurement.

Finished he takes up the syringe and injects more air into the tube, reconnects it.

STUDENT DOCTOR

And again, just a little more this time. You're doing well, my little Frankenstein.

Lucy rolls her eyes. He smiles kindly at her.

STUDENT DOCTOR

Nearly done.

He makes a note of the new measurement.

Her phone rings and even though she has the tube in her mouth she finds the phone in her pocket and checks to see who has called.

LUCY

(garbled)

Hey.

She signals to him to get the tube out of her mouth. He hurries over, very worried. Slowly, slowly he pulls out the tube.

STUDENT DOCTOR

Ok, it's OK.

Once the tube is out Lucy gives a little cough, wipes her mouth.

LUCY

Sorry, important call. I have to take it. I'll be back.

What can he do?

STUDENT DOCTOR

OK. Bad Frankenstein.

LUCY

See, I'm leaving my bag. I promise. Two minutes.

STUDENT DOCTOR

(shrugs)

OK.

She leaves the room.

INT. SLEEPING BEAUTY CHAMBER - NIGHT

Lucy is asleep, naked, under snowy-white sheets, in the austere Sleeping Beauty Chamber.

Two figures enter the room: this time it is Clara and the man who deliberately tripped Lucy at the first dinner party, MAN 2. They sit straight-backed at the end of the bed; Lucy lies between them. A formal composition.

CLARA

There is the one rule: no penetration.

MAN 2

The only way I can get hard these days is if I take a truckload of viagra and then a beautiful woman jams her finger up my arse. I'm the one who needs penetration and I don't expect that good fortune tonight.

CLARA

You are quite right.

MAN 2

Thank you, Clara.

She gracefully stands, departs.

He takes a silver cigarette case out his jacket pockets and lights a cigarette. Inhales, exhales.

He balances his lit cigarette on the edge of the bedside table, with the glowing end off the wood.

He slowly undresses. He is barrel-chested with a big gut.

He retrieves his cigarette, inhales, and studies Lucy: she has rolled over so that he faces her back.

He reaches across the bed and slowly, purposefully extinguishes the lit cigarette on the soft plain of Lucy's shoulder blade. She does not react.

He returns the cigarette to the bedside table and then manoeuvres into bed.

He reaches under the sheets and pulls her knee back.

MAN 2

Spread your cunt, dumb bitch.
That's good, good girl.

MAN 2 (cont'd)

I'll press your button and get you wet and fuck you with my big stiff prick, my fucking horse's prick, till you fucking scream.

He tires of this futile attempt to arouse her. He lies back and rests his head between his hands. Then - on sudden thought - he grabs her by the hair and jerks her head around.

He presses himself close to her and starts to slowly lick her face. He leers and licks every inch of her face. Her cheeks, nose, forehead, eyelids. It is obscene.

MAN 2

Whore. (Lick). Fucking bitch.
(Lick). Cunt. (Lick).

This is an excruciating scene of utter degradation.

INT/EXT. - CAR - COUNTRYSIDE - MORNING

Lucy is on her way home in the car, her face pressed to the window, observing the countryside.

She turns away from the window and takes off her jacket. She rolls down the shoulder of her top, trying to get a view of what pains her. She wriggles but can't see the burn mark as it is in her blindspot.

She frowns and returns to staring out the window. The driver makes no comment.

Countryside. Flat mud-ploughed fields.

EXT. CAMPUS - CORRIDOR - TUTORIAL ROOM- DAY

Another day. Lucy walks the length of the campus corridors. She has lost the usual spring in her step.

A long walk.

She enters the tutorial room and finds a seat. The rest of the rows around her fill with fellow students.

The lecture begins: this is an advanced mathematics lecture.

LECTURER

Good morning.

He writes a complex logarithm on the white board.

Lucy copies the logarithm step by step in her notebook. The other students all do the same - concentrating intently.

She feels her phone vibrate in her jacket and quickly pulls it out, checks the caller.

LUCY
(whispering)
Hi.

Her neighbouring student glares at her.

LUCY
I'm coming.

She packs up her stuff and to the chagrin of her fellow students climbs over them, one by one. It's a major disruption.

The lecturer pauses.

Only when she leaves the room does he resume the proof of the algorithm.

EXT. CAMPUS - DAY

Lucy power-walks through the campus, at times almost breaking into a run. A new-found determination, vigour, urgency.

She reaches the cab-rank and arranges a ride.

The cab drives away.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE LANDING/BIRDmann'S APARTMENT- DAY

A little later. Lucy does the secret knock at Birdmann's door: Tap, tap-tap, tap-tap, tap.

She listens for a response inside. Nothing.

Quick - she has her distinctive set of keys ready in hand. One of these keys fits his door; she's had it all along. She hurries down the hallway into the living area.

The place is spotless. Birdmann is in bed. He is wearing damp pyjama's, buttoned to the neck. The mattress has a yellowed sweat stain. He is gaunt, unshaven and very, very sick. His eyes are heavy-lidded. He can't move.

There are two empty bottle of vodka on the table. Two empty silver plastic pill packets.

She quickly inspects the packets.

LUCY
It's OK, I'm here. I'm here.

He studies her; he is barely compus mentus. It takes all his strength to faintly smile. She returns a tender look. He tries to speak - he fails. Mmmmmnnnnn makes a groaning mumble. He tries to speak again.

BIRDMANN
Ta- take off - top.

LUCY
Yes, OK.

She watches him lovingly as she slowly removes her jacket and then unbuttons her blouse. She is topless. He forces another small smile.

She carefully climbs into bed with him.

She can't bear to watch his face so she gently turns him over. She spoons against his back, her hands under his pyjama top. Clasping him close.

LUCY
(whisper)
Goodnight Birdmann.

His breath is deep and snaggled. She is resting her cheek against his back, infinitesimally rising and falling with his breath.

Her lower lip begins to tremble, spasm. She bites down on it. Tears stream down her cheeks. She doesn't make a sound.

She gently rocks him to and fro.

He is dying. She holds him close.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Late that night Lucy is clearing the tables at the restaurant. All the diners have left. She is winching the tabletop: her movements are slow. Finished, she clumsily tips a chair upside down onto the table. It clatters to the ground. She tries again.

She is wiping down another table, around and around and around, when the COOK calls out on his way into the room:

COOK
You right to lock up?

LUCY
(calling back)
OK.

He sees her and senses something amiss.

COOK
You OK? Tough innings?

LUCY
Yeah.

She quickly turns back to wiping down the table so that he can't see she is on the point of tears.

He watches a moment, unsure of what to do. Leaves.

COOK

See ya.

She continues working.

EXT. SUBURBAN BACKYARD - DAY

A sunny day. Birdmann's wake is being held in a modest suburban backyard. A table of food and drink has been placed on the lawn. A Hills Hoist. There are about 15 mourners...his family and some of his old circle of friends. It's like a subdued BBQ. A plate of cut-sandwiches is being handed around. A young family member is wandering with a camera making a memorial video. No-one is crying.

Lucy is standing at the end of the garden, aside from the others, observing the scene - and talking to MARK. Mark is one of the old friends: once her boyfriend. He wears a suit for the occasion. She is in her best dress and heels. She is drinking red wine.

LUCY

I love drinking. I'm good at it.

MARK

When did you last see him?

LUCY

About three or four months ago. I took him out to dinner. I think he was wearing your old suit. The grey one.

Mark nods.

MARK

I hadn't seen the Birdmann in...well, how long is it since I saw you. A year?... They say it was two weeks before his brother found him. Two weeks in this weather.

LUCY

Will you marry me?

Mark is taken aback: angry and astonished. He tries to keep his voice down.

MARK

What! Why now? Why now! You had your chance.

LUCY
(sincere)
Go on.

MARK
Fuck you. Fuck you to death.

LUCY
That's one way to put it.

MARK
(stern)
I'm with Helen now. I can't believe
you. I don't believe you. You don't
believe you. Fuck it.

He is visibly distressed. Lucy doesn't speak. Her gaze is provocative, bemused. She means what she says even if it is an impossible ask.

MARK (CONT'D)
(composing himself,
priggish)
Helen is courteous. You should try
it. Courtesy.

LUCY
(raising her glass)
Courtesy.

INT. SLEEPING BEAUTY CHAMBER - NIGHT

Lucy is asleep, naked, under snowy-white sheets, in the austere Sleeping Beauty Chamber.

She adjusts herself in her sleep.

Two figures enter the room: this time it is Clara and another old man from the dinner party, MAN 3. They sit straight-backed at the end of the bed; Lucy lies between them. A formal composition.

CLARA
You will be safe. There is no shame
here. No-one can see you.

MAN 3
Thank you, Clara.

CLARA
I ask, though, that there be no
penetration. I also ask that you
take care not to leave a mark. No
marks.

MAN 3
(nods)
Thank you.

She gracefully stands and leaves the room.

Soon after she is gone he stands up. He unbuttons his shirt. Still in his trousers, he lifts the sheet and then pulls Lucy by the legs, down to the end of the bed. He turns her so that she lies horizontally across the end of the bed. It is difficult to manoeuvre her limp body.

He bends and picks her up in his arms. She is heavy, a dead-weight. Her head flops back; he tries to cradle it.

He walks with her around the room, lumbering. She weighs heavy.

He is returning to the bed, when he has a back spasm and he lets her drop. She falls onto the edge of the mattress then slides to the floor.

He, too, drops to the ground and grips his back. On all fours. He is in pain.

She is splayed on the ground. Limp.

He is alarmed by what he has done. He crawls over to her and checks to see if she is still breathing, is still asleep. She is.

He clammers up and then struggles to get her back into the bed. This is a long physical struggle. He has tears in his eyes.

At last he succeeds. He positions her once more as the sleeper.

Then he sits by the bedside table and - weary - slowly unbuckles his belt.

INT. PHOTOCOPY ROOM - DAY

The red-lipped colleague is working the photocopier. She is banging papers around, muttering under her breath. To her great frustration, when she tries to remove a staple from a document she breaks a fingernail.

COLLEAGUE 2
(inspecting her ruined
manicure)
Shit!

Just as she gets back to copying Lucy shows up. Unapologetic, she enters with a slight limp, as if she has a stone in her shoe. She carries an injury from her fall. Dark circles under her eyes from sleepless nights.

The colleague pointedly checks her watch.

COLLEAGUE 2 (CONT'D)
We do fire people here, you know.

Lucy chooses not to answer.

COLLEAGUE 2 (CONT'D)
Well?

Lucy remains silent.

COLLEAGUE 2 (CONT'D)
Alright - you're fired.

LUCY
(without insolence)
Thank you.

The colleague swallows a bitter laugh of disbelief, turns back to the machine.

INT. HYPER-MALL - DAY

Later that day. Lucy is walking through an artificially lit hyper-mall.

Past elaborate islands of indoor plants. Past a man who has two dogs on a leash: a wolf-like Alsatian and a tiny toy-poodle. The universe is out of kilter.

She walks with self-possessed determination despite her limp.

INT. HYPER-MALL - SPY SHOP - DAY

Lucy peruses goods in a Spy Shop that sells CCTV, listening devices, night vision, surveillance equipment, cameras, debugging, alarms, transmitters... There are CCTV cameras active all around the small store. Out of the corner of her eye she clocks herself onscreen.

She checks out all the goods and then pauses before the display of mini video cameras.

The shop assistant is 19, spotty-faced. He's not in a rush to make a sale. She has to get his attention.

LUCY
Hi there.

He comes over.

ASSISTANT

Hi.

She points to a mini-camera. Teeny-tiny.

LUCY

What do you think of that one?

ASSISTANT

Not bad.

He gets it out of the glass cabinet.

INT. TUTORIAL ROOM- DAY

Lucy is sitting in the tutorial room, at the end of a row.

She has placed her new mini-video camera beside her notebook.

She is recording the lecture.

See: POV through her camera.

This is a lecture on the game of Go. A complicated diagram is projected on a screen: it shows the progress of a match. Some black and white numbered circles represent the positions (reference: The Master of Go, Yasunari Kawabata, Fourth Ito session moves 122- 145 at p 127). As the lecturer laser-points to the various circles he narrates the game:

LECTURER

OK, back to the fourth session as narrated by Mr Kawabata in his novel The Master of Go...Let's get Going...

The students moan good-naturedly at his pun.

LECTURER (CONT'D)

We open with Otake's sealed move Black 121. The Master responded with white 122. Here. Three minutes later Black 123 brought Otake cutting back into White formation....here Black 127 turned again to the centre of the board...and Black 129 lashed out to decapitate this triangle here that the Master had so stubbornly put together. Black was showing an aggressive spirit, competitive. Nota bene. And then....and then...what did the Master do?

LECTURER (cont'd)

He counter-attacked to the right
with White 130. White 130
(Amazed) ... Unforseeable...
Incredible... And with that move
the invincible Master's fate was
sealed. White 130. Why did he do
it? After 27 minutes of
deliberation... Why did he ensure
his own defeat?

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Lucy is taking the train home from university. She is sitting opposite a sleeping woman, a HAIRDRESSER, late 30's, who has an elaborate J-Lo hair-do that is incongruous with her rough-tough pugilistic face. Lots of bling. Knuckles interlaced. A New Idea magazine lies open on the hairdresser's lap.

Lucy studies the sleeping hairdresser.

Train announcement: Attention travellers - maintain visual contact with your possessions at all times.

The sleeping woman doesn't stir. Her magazine slides off her lap onto the floor. Lucy retrieves it, holds it safe. She continues to study the sleeper.

A little drool escapes from the sleeper's mouth. Lucy moves so that now she is sitting right beside the hairdresser. Hesitating a moment, she bunches up her sleeve in her hand and gingerly reaches out toward the stranger's mouth. Closer and closer. A delicate operation. She dabs away the drool.

Lucy remains seated beside the woman: as protective safeguard. Her eyes shine with tears. After a while the hairdresser lolls her head, startles awake.

LUCY

You dropped this.

She returns the magazine.

HAIRDRESSER

Thanks luv.

A shared tiny smile.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

It's the end of another night. Most of the chairs and tables in the restaurant have been stacked. Lucy is vigorously cleaning the last tabletops.

The Cook is ready to leave.

COOK

You coming to the party?

LUCY

Sorry, can't. Big day tomorrow.

COOK

How big?

LUCY

I'm sleeping.

COOK

What, live a little.

From his pocket he produces two cling-wrapped white pills.

COOK (CONT'D)

Ta-da!

LUCY

What is it?

COOK

Who knows. Something good for you.

LUCY

Why not.

They both drop a pill.

COOK

There you go, back from the dead.

LUCY

Fear of death is the number one
hoax.

She swings a chair up in the air. Holds it high: looks at him, her eyes glint. Bang: she slams it down on the table with full-force. Let the night begin.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Close on a calm sea under the night sky. Black water. The Cook's head emerges from the water, then Lucy's.

They revel in the elements - high. No romantic kiss, no childish waterfight. A small wave breaks over them. They go under again. Hold their breath for as long as they can.

Up.

INT. THE EXCELON- BEDROOM - MORNING

Lucy and the Cook are sprawled naked on the bed in the Excelon. The room is bereft of any homely touches. A windowful of bright morning light.

The sound of Lucy's phone: ring, ring, ring.

Errgh, she groans and rolls over, she tries to lean across his body so she can silence her phone but it's out of reach.

Whoever it is keeps ringing.

LUCY

You get it.

He reaches out, fumbles around and finds her phone. He switches it off. Drops it. Then he collapses back down into bed.

COOK

What was that fucked-up shit, I'm so - ugh.

They are both wretched and try to sleep some more.

A moment later. Knock-knock-knock: someone is knocking at the door. They ignore it.

Knock! Knock! Knock! Knock! Knock! Knock!

Lucy grumbles and gets out of bed. She picks a garment off the floor and uses it to cover herself.

Knock! Knock! Knock! Without cease.

LUCY

(under her breath)

Yeah, yeah.

Bleary, she opens the door.

It's her driver.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Shit. OK, sorry, give me three minutes.

She shuts the door in his face. She returns to her bedroom.

The Cook opens one eye as if to say 'what's going on'.

LUCY

Don't move. Let yourself out.

He goes back to sleep. Pulls the pillow around his head.

She hurriedly dresses.

She combs her knotty hair back in a lumpy ponytail.

She finds her knapsack. She rummages around under her mess and unearths the mini-video camera.

She makes sure to pack it away deep in the knapsack. Leaves the room.

INT. EXCELON LOBBY - MORNING

Lucy and the driver wait in the lobby for the elevator. A lurid plastic plant in a large terracotta pot rests against the wall. A group of CHINESE STUDENTS streams out of the neighbouring apartment: six young men. Nods of acknowledgement to Lucy and the driver. The students are chattering in Mandarin about the day ahead. Some are off to work, some are off to the library.

Lucy slumps against the wall, the driver unobtrusively props her up.

LUCY

Thanks.

The door to Lucy's apartment opens; the Cook appears in unbuckled jeans, bare-chested.

He gestures that she should come back to bed.

Pause. She deflects the request with a slight shake of the head. He gives her a chance to change her mind. She looks away.

He retreats. They continue their wait in the lobby. Now the door to the Chinese students' apartment opens and a girl runs out in her pyjamas: she gives her boyfriend a packed lunch. He kisses her on the cheek. When she is gone his friends make a mummy's-boy joke at his expense - which he good-naturedly shrugs off.

The elevator arrives. The students politely offer Lucy a right of way. She enters first, escorted by the driver. The students pile in.

INT/EXT CAR - COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Lucy sits in the back of the car, being driven through the countryside.

Her face changes as her mouth fills with saliva: a sudden nausea.

She leans forward toward the driver.

LUCY
Pull over! Pull over!

He immediately pulls over.

She stumbles out of the car and vomits on the side of the road.

When she returns to the car he reaches back and hands her a plastic bottle of water and a packet of mints.

She accepts, sinks down in the seat.

LUCY
Thanks.

They drive away.

EXT. MANSION -DUSK

Clara is waiting outside the house. Impeccably dressed, as ever.

Lucy gets out of the car and Clara comes over to greet her, smiling.

CLARA
Hello darling.

LUCY
Hi.

Lucy switches her knapsack to the shoulder furthest from Clara.

Clara is momentarily taken aback by Lucy's appearance. As they walk to the house she asks in a concerned voice:

CLARA
Are you well?

LUCY
Yes, fine thank-you.

CLARA
Are you sure?

LUCY
Yes, fine thanks.

A valiant smile. They walk arm-in-arm, a gesture initiated by Clara: an ambivalence between intimacy and frog-marching.

CLARA
(confiding but callous)
A shower always works wonders.

INT. MANSION - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

As before, Clara is sitting on a sofa in the living room. On the low table in front of her is the silver tray laden with an antique fine porcelain tea-set: a tea-pot, a cup, a saucer. The silver whisk and square of silk cloth. Clara is not doing anything at all: she sits perfectly still with her hands folded in her lap. After this stillness she discreetly checks her watch; briefly fidgets with her hair; then returns to stillness.

The sound of a door closing shut and Lucy returning to the room - fresh from the shower. Clara gives slight deferential nod to indicate her approval.

Lucy sits herself down nearby Clara. She sits straight-backed, tall. Self-possessed. She is wearing the long silk kimono, tied at the waist. She deposits her ugly knapsack by her barefeet.

Clara begins the tea ceremony. She is reaching out in a slow ceremonial manner for the tea-pot when Lucy interrupts her: though this is a great shock to Clara, a huge breach of protocol, she disguises her surprise and returns her hands to her lap. Implacable, she folds one hand over the other.

LUCY

I would like to ask a favour.

Clara doesn't say anything. After a long moment her silence is deemed consent: Lucy continues.

LUCY

I haven't been sleeping well. At home. I need to see what goes on, in there. Just once.

Clara suppresses her displeasure. Long pause.

CLARA

But how will this be possible?

To Clara's further surprise and displeasure Lucy slowly opens her knapsack and scrabbles around: she retrieves the mini-video camera.

It is so small it fits inside her closed fist. She extends this fist to Clara, opens her hand: displaying the tiny camera on her palm.

Clara remains implacable. Long pause.

CLARA

I understand. I do understand. But my dear, my clients.

CLARA (cont'd)

How can I expose them - to be frank
- to blackmail. That's not the way
we do things.

LUCY

Perhaps if you asked - just the
once - they would agree.

Clara shakes her head.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I thought about that....We can hide
the camera on the shelf, beside the
vase. In the morning I will watch
it here. Then you can destroy it.

Clara, implacable, sees Lucy is driving a hard bargain.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Otherwise...

She deliberately does not complete the sentence/ultimatum.

Clara remains calm. An almost imperceptible frown. Long
pause.

CLARA

Very well.

LUCY

Great.

Clara resumes the tea-ceremony. Once more she discreetly
checks her watch.

CLARA

And I can assume you are quite
well?

Lucy pauses, nods.

CLARA (CONT'D)

In good health?

LUCY

I'm perfectly fine, thank you.

CLARA

Good girl.

With slow cold grace she prepares the tea for Lucy.

INT. SLEEPING BEAUTY CHAMBER - NIGHT

Lucy is asleep, naked, under snowy-white sheets, in the
austere Sleeping Beauty Chamber.

A figure enters the Chamber: it is Clara.

This time she does not enter gracefully - but instead, furtively. She approaches and hastily removes the hidden camera: that is, Lucy's hidden camera is our POV. We see Clara's face, her arms outreached and then we see the POV bump along ground as she walks away with the camera in hand. Double-cross. She leaves.

Back to surveying the Chamber.

As soon as Clara has left - Sleeping Beauty awakes.

Lucy pulls herself together and stumbling, staggering, disoriented, struggling to keep her eyes open - she gets out of bed.

She goes to the side of the Chamber and opens a sliding panel in the wall. This is where her knapsack is stored. She fumbles inside and retrieves a second mini-camera.

Bleary, fighting the drugs, she manages to hide this second secret camera in the room. We now see through this POV.

Note: Start secret camera footage. Time and date code on bottom of screen.

She collapses back into bed. Gets under the sheets. Passes out.

She sleeps.

Two figures enter the room: Clara and Man 1. This time Clara walks with ceremonial grace. She is carrying the silver tea-tray laden with the antique porcelain tea-set, whisk and silk square.

They sit at the end of the bed. Clara to the left, the old man to the right. The silver tray between them.

Man 1 is dressed in a suit. He has taken special care with his appearance.

Clara is implacable.

MAN 1
(softly, gently)
Thank you, Clara.

She gives him a small tender smile. She performs the tea-ceremony. With meditative grace she very slowly opens the tea-pot and stirs the tea with the whisk.

She returns the whisk to the tray and dries it carefully with the silk cloth. Folds the cloth.

She slowly pours the tea - a long pour - and then hands the cup to the old man in a deferential manner.

He takes it and raises it one hand, rotates the cup so as to admire its design.

Slowly, surely he begins to drink.

She does not watch him drink but faces out. Implacable. Her hands folded in her lap.

He steadily sips his tea. He returns the cup to the tray.

MAN 1

Thank you.

A long pause. She is still facing out. He remains seated, motionless.

Eventually she slowly stands and picks up the tray. She crosses in front of him and takes the tray over to the bedside table. She carefully sets it down.

She walks back in front of the bed. Before she reaches the door she stops and addresses the old man. A small bow.

CLARA

Goodnight.

MAN 1

Goodnight.

She leaves.

He stands and undresses.

Naked, he gets into bed with Lucy, under the sheets. He admires her. Feels her soft hair. Strokes the curve of her shoulder with gentleness.

He reaches over to the bedside table and pours himself a cup of tea. Drinks.

And another cup.

Finished, he lies down beside her.

They sleep: after a while the footage flickers the tiniest fraction, the time and date code changes. Another flicker, another time period.

Note: End of secret camera footage.

INT. SLEEPING BEAUTY CHAMBER - MORNING

The morning-song of country birds.

Clara enters the Sleeping Beauty Chamber and throws open the curtains. Bright bare daylight. She is perfectly groomed in a new suit. Chignon. Pearls.

Lucy and the old man are asleep in bed, under the snowy-white sheet.

Clara walks around the front of the bed, over to the bedside table nearby the old man. He lying on his side, facing toward the wall. Eyes closed.

With great self-control she bends down and thumbs his eyes open. Deadman's stare.

Then she thumbs them closed with complete sangfroid.

She holds her hand under nose to make sure he is not breathing. Implacable. Other than to take a deep breath she betrays no emotion.

She slowly moves to sit at the end of the bed. She rests a long moment. She studies her folded hands.

After a while she reaches for Lucy's foot. Clara sits back a little so that she can nestle Lucy's foot in her lap. The foot is still beneath the sheet.

Clara finds Lucy's big toe and gives it a wiggle. Then she wiggles the next toe. Then the next. Then the next. A silent game of 'This Little Piggy'. Then she wiggles the little toe. She runs her fingers up Lucy's calf.

Suddenly she is disconcerted that Lucy has utterly failed to respond. A look of horror crosses her face. Animated, she snatches Lucy's foot from under the sheet and feels it: cold.

Instantly, she abandons all composure. Ruptures. She panics.

She crawls up onto the bed, crawls over Lucy's body.

She desperately turns Lucy's head so that she is lying face up. We see Lucy is pale. Clara frantically slaps her cheeks.

Shakes her.

No response.

Clara begins mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

Three quick breaths in succession. One-two-three.

She thumps hard on Lucy's chest five times.

Back to breathing: three quick breaths one-two-three.

Thumps.

Lucy gives a pathetic cough...comes alive.

Bafflement gives way to horror and dismay as she sees Clara crouching over her. Face to face.

Once more, Clara grips Lucy's nose and recommences breathing.

Lucy groans - a deep instinctive animal groan. She pushes Clara away.

Clara climbs off Lucy and sits on the edge of the bed. She tries refolding her shaking hands in her lap.

Behind her Lucy continues to groan.

LUCY

O! No!!!

CLARA

(very quiet)

Get dressed.

These groans and cries escalate, louder and louder.

Lucy sits upright: Lady Lazarus. She sobs and gags.

She flails against the wall. No! No! She smashes against the mattress.

Howls and wails. She is - undone. Utter horror and pain.

She rails against being brought back into the world.

Her lamentations are unbearable. Excruciating. A long unbearable scene. Screams and howls and wails. Outrage.

Meanwhile Clara is sitting very still, her hands folded in her lap. A prayerful monkey-grip.

Close on her: tears slowly form in her eyes, run down her cheeks. Surrounded by mayhem, she does not move an inch.

END