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Irma

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I R M A

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Film, Theatre and Communication Arts
Creative Writing

by

Karen Atherton

B.A. University of New Orleans, 2001

May 2008

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A silver Lincoln Navigator pulls up in front of a two-story brick house and parks.

INT. SUV - DAY

IRMA, 28, 5'9", 400 pounds, turns off the engine. Candy wrappers litter the interior. Her fat hand reaches for a plastic bag and opens it to candy bars - Nestle's Crunch, Milky Way, Snickers, Mounds, and York Peppermint Patties. She chooses the Snickers, rips it open and bites into it. As she chews, she spaces out and a look of peace fills her face.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A blue older model PT Cruiser turns the corner onto the street and slowly drives to park behind Irma.

INT. SUV - DAY

Irma quickly stuffs the remaining Snickers bar back in the bag and wipes her mouth with her hand. She looks at herself in the rearview mirror and brushes her strong, dark eyebrows upward with her pinkie.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Irma, wearing dark pants and a flowing blouse prepares to exit the SUV. She opens the door, positions her legs to step out and carefully steps on the street.

She walks to the PT Cruiser as a COUPLE, 30's, exits the car. The three shake hands.

As Irma leads the way to the house, she stumbles on the sidewalk. The man reaches out to steady her, and Irma catches herself before she falls. The Couple exchanges looks of relief.

Irma opens the lock box, removes a key and opens the front door.

They all enter the house.

INT. BRICK HOUSE - DAY

The empty house is in pristine condition: walls freshly painted white, windows sparkling clean, wooden floors shining. Irma turns on lights and ceiling fans.

IRMA
Beautiful, isn't it? Move-in
condition.

Irma's voice is light and pleasant, musical, not the voice you'd expect from a huge woman.

The Couple nods.

WOMAN
Look at all the windows.

MAN
Yeah, the better to lose heat in
the winter.

IRMA
But lots of natural light.

The Couple looks at each other.

IRMA
It came on the market a couple
hours ago. You're probably the
first to see it.

INT. STAIRS - DAY

As she leads them up the stairs, she slowly and carefully watches where she walks. The Man looks impatiently at the Woman. As Irma steps into the....

SECOND FLOOR HALL

She is out of breath. She tries to catch her breath and enters....

THE MASTER BEDROOM

A white mantel with mirror runs along one wall.

The Couple follows her in.

WOMAN

This room is perfect, isn't it,
Jim?

MAN

Maybe.

He gives her a warning look.

Irma moves and opens the door to....

THE BATHROOM

It's a small master bath, and Irma stares at the narrow doorway she can't fit through. She smiles pleasantly at the Couple and remains outside as they enter.

IRMA (O.S.)

The fixtures are lovely, aren't
they?

The Man flips a switch and sea green glass fixtures light up the room, giving it an underwater feel.

WOMAN

You could go swimming.

MAN

If it weren't so small.

The couple turns the lights off and on.

They exit to....

THE BEDROOM

WOMAN

I've never seen a fireplace with
carved birds and flowers.

MAN

Where's the closet?

IRMA

You'll need a wardrobe in here.

Irma adjusts her blouse and walks to the window.

IRMA

Oh, Jim, look at the back yard.

The Couple moves to the window and looks down into the yard. He shrugs.

A huge back yard with an oak tree in the middle is surrounded by a natural wooden fence.

WOMAN

I've always wanted a big yard.

The Woman gives the Man's hand a squeeze.

WOMAN

This might be our house, Jim.

He shruggs.

IRMA

I thought it could be.

EXT. BRICK HOUSE - DAY

IRMA

Would you like to follow me back to the office? We can discuss the offer.

MAN

Sure thing.

They each shake Irma's hand and get in their car and drive off.

INT. SUV - DAY

Irma reaches for the bag, grabs the opened Snickers and bites into it. She starts the SUV and drives away.

INT. HOYNE'S REALTY - DAY

A busy real estate office with twenty desks, and AGENTS sit at many of them.

A pretty blonde RECEPTIONIST, 25, in a stylish blue suit, sits at the front desk.

Irma enters and the Receptionist nods. She can't help staring at Irma's body. Irma notices.

Irma nods to some of the Agents as she walks to her desk in the back next to the copy machine. She sits and begins to write up the offer.

The BOSS, male, 55, walks up to her.

BOSS

You sure hopped on that one,
Ninter.

She laughs.

IRMA

I sure did.

BOSS

I sort of promised it to a friend.

IRMA

Oh well, huh?

He gives her a mean look.

She feigns surprise, then smiles. Irma continues working.

LATER

She looks at her watch and then toward the door. Day has turned to dusk. She looks at the unsigned contract, opens a drawer and puts it inside.

Just then the Boss approaches and looks in the open drawer. He sees the contract and a book, "Broker's Exam".

BOSS

You don't need to be worrying
about the Broker's Exam, heh, heh,
heh.

Irma shuts the drawer.

BOSS

I need some copying done. How
about it?

Irma rises and walks to his desk.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Irma pushes a cart and turns into the candy aisle. She stops by the M&M's and picks up two bags - M&M's Milk Chocolate and M&M's Dark Chocolate - and drops them into her cart. She spies the Whoppers and Junior Mints and puts those in the cart.

Totally focused she moves down the aisle. She grabs York Mints, bags of Mounds Bars, Snickers and Hershey's with almonds and two bags of Hershey's Kisses. She picks up two Milky Way-Milk Chocolate bars and four Milky Way-Midnight Dark bars.

Irma arrives at the checkout and places the candy on the moving counter.

The CASHIER gives Irma a quick look. Irma makes no eye contact with her and pays with plastic.

INT. BAKERY - DAY

Irma waits for her turn and studies the pastries in the case.

MAN with a belly waits his turn and goggles at Irma's size. He looks at a slender WOMAN and shakes his head. The Woman stares at Irma and then looks down.

INSERT - BAKERY PASTRY CASE

Pans of Napoleons, eclairs, jelly rolls, chocolate doughnuts, Bismarks and long johns fill the case.

A single chocolate cupcake sits next to the jelly rolls.

BACK TO SCENE

SALESLADY

Hi, what would you like?

IRMA

Let me have three Napoleons, four eclairs - two chocolate and two vanilla, the ones with the most frosting. And that jelly roll.

Irma points at the lone chocolate cupcake.

IRMA

Do you have any more of those?

The Saleslady shakes her head.

Irma pays and picks up the boxes of pastries.

As she turns to leave, she looks directly at the Man who quickly averts his eyes. Irma exits.

INT. JEWEL SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Irma stops in the pasta section and selects three boxes of spaghetti, one rigatoni and one spirals. She picks up three large cans of Contadina Tomato Paste and three tomato sauce.

Irma walks through the frozen food section. She sees Weight Watchers Dinners. A look of wistfulness crosses her face, and she opens the case and removes one of them.

She moves to the Hungry Man Dinners and places five of them in her cart.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Irma, holding six bags of groceries, enters the elevator with seven other PEOPLE. She presses 15. The doors close, and the elevator rises.

At the 3rd floor it stops, the doors open and an OLD WOMAN stands ready to enter when she sees Irma. Her eyes look over to the....

INSERT - WEIGHT RESTRICTION SIGN

BACK TO SCENE

The Old Lady looks back at Irma, shakes her head and steps back. The doors close.

EXT. CITY STREET - LA CUBANA - NIGHT

Irma approaches the nightclub as SAMBA MUSIC pulses out of the open door. Irma moves her hands to the beat, briefly looks in the club and moves on.

A MAN walking behind her smiles.

MAN

Hey! Hey, Baby! Wacha doin'?

Irma ignores him and walks away

MAN

You sure are one big hunk of woman. Wanna have a drink?

Irma keeps walking.

MAN

How 'bout somethin' to eat? You like to eat, doncha?

Irma walks faster.

MAN

Hey, I asked you a question. Who d'ya think you are? Hunh? Hunh?

Irma approaches Walgreen's and hurries in.

She exits the store with a bag of candy bars. She looks around, and the Man is gone. She opens a Heath Bar and begins to eat it.

INT. IRMA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Irma wears a babydoll pajama top which hardly covers her. She stands at the stove cooking spaghetti sauce, rigatoni, meatballs and sausages.

She tastes the sauce, nods and stirs it. She turns over the meatballs and sausages. She picks up a large spoon and gives the boiling rigatoni a good stir. She catches a rigatoni on the spoon and runs cold water over it. She bites into it, shakes her head and drops it back into the boiling water.

She opens the refrigerator, sees the diet Dr. Pepper and takes out a bottle of regular Dr. Pepper. She opens the freezer and a gallon of Neapolitan ice cream falls out. She replaces it with the other four gallons of ice cream and holds them in place as she removes an ice cube tray. She slams the freezer door.

A water bowl with "Amber" written on it falls from the top of the refrigerator, and Irma catches it. She looks at it sadly and replaces it.

She fills a large glass with ice and replaces the ice cube tray in the freezer. She pours the Dr. Pepper. She drinks some and sets the glass down on the counter.

She stirs the sauce again. All of sudden she grabs her chest.

She holds herself, doubles over and falls to the floor, moaning.

IRMA

Help me. Help me.

She lies there moaning, trying to massage her chest. Then she passes out for a moment. She wakes and can't get up. She crawls to the phone, dials 911.

OPERATOR (O.S.)

Nine-one-one.

Irma passes out again.

KNOCKING on the door. More KNOCKING.

Irma looks around. She can't move.

The door opens and the BUILDING MANAGER enters. He looks around.

BUILDING MANAGER

What's goin' on? Are you okay?

He sees her lying almost-naked on the floor and signals to two EMTs outside the door.

The EMTs, a woman and man, enter with a collapsible gurney and all their paraphernalia. They see Irma and look at each other. They shake their heads.

The EMT Woman makes a call to the Fire Department.

EMT WOMAN

It looks like a heart attack. She must weigh 400 pounds. You better send enough guys to get her out of here.

Irma looks groggily around; she's out of it.

The EMTs and Building Manager stand and stare at her.

The EMT Woman kneels down next to Irma and gives her oxygen.

EMT WOMAN

The Fire Department is on its way.
Just hang in there, okay?

Irma just looks at her.

The EMT Man pushes furniture to the side of the room. Stacks of Anne Perry, Agatha Christie and Martin Cruz Smith mysteries fall off the table. He shoves them out of the way with his foot.

FIVE FIREMEN arrive with a huge, round stretcher. For a moment they stand around Irma and stare at her. She looks up at them.

FIREMAN #1
Set the stretcher down.

FIREMAN #2
How we gonna do this. I'm not
breakin' my back.

FIREMAN #3
We'll have to roll her onto it.
Sorry, Lady.

All five of them roll Irma's almost-naked body onto the round stretcher.

Irma keeps her eyes closed. Finally she lies in the middle of the stretcher.

The Firemen stand around the stretcher.

FIREMAN #1
When I say three . . .

FIREMAN #3
Wait a minute.

He moves into the bedroom and a second later emerges with a blanket. He throws it over Irma and covers her.

FIREMAN #3
Okay.

FIREMAN #1
One . . . two . . . three!

The five Firemen strain and struggle and raise up Irma. They walk to the door where they tilt the stretcher to exit. Irma slides to the side.

FIREMAN #4
Watch it! Careful now!

FIREMAN #5

Yeah, we don't want a lawsuit like
that five hundred pound guy they
dropped down the stairs.

The Firemen quickly adjust the stretcher and get Irma out
of the door.

The EMTs exit after the Firemen.

The Building Manager walks over to the stove and looks at
the food cooking and boiling. He turns the gas off. He
smells the sauce and dips a spoon into it, fills it, blows
on it and tastes it. He nods and does it again. Then he
removes a rigatoni from the boiling water and dips it into
the sauce.

INT. ST. ELIZABETH'S HOSPITAL - IRMA'S ROOM - DAY

Irma sits up in bed. She wears several hospital gowns tied
together.

A NURSE enters and places an extra-long blood pressure cuff
around Irma's arm. She shakes her head at the reading.
She removes it, writes on the patient chart and exits.

DOCTOR, male, 50, enters and moves to the bed. He looks
serious.

DOCTOR

You were lucky this time, you know
that? It's what we call a 'false
heart attack'. Hiatal hernia.

IRMA

Oh.

DOCTOR

It mimics chest pains, angina.

Irma nods.

DOCTOR

But it's just a matter of time.

IRMA

What?

DOCTOR
Somebody as big as you - there's
not much hope.

Irma looks devastated.

IRMA
There must be something you can do
for me.

The Doctor shakes his head.

DOCTOR
If you'd been able to stop eating,
you'd have done so by now.

IRMA
I don't know. I can't.

DOCTOR
See what I mean? That's exactly
what I said.

Irma cries.

The Doctor studies her for a moment.

DOCTOR
Have you ever considered a gastric
bypass?

Irma looks shocked.

IRMA
An operation? Surgery?

DOCTOR
I don't know though.

He shakes his head.

DOCTOR
Well, do you want to consider it?

Irma looks out the window and watches a bird fly and dip
down and up again.

IRMA
I don't really want to die.

DOCTOR
Well then . . .

IRMA
What happens when you get hungry?

DOCTOR
You eat - a little bit, just like normal people. And then you stop. A little later, a little more and stop. And pretty soon it gets to be a habit. Stopping.

IRMA
I need some time to think about this.

The doctor shrugs.

DOCTOR
Take as much time as you want.

EXT. IRMA'S HI-RISE BUILDING - DAY

Irma approaches. She hears a FIRE SIREN and pauses and looks for it. She walks in.

INT. BUILDING FOYER - DAY

Irma opens her mailbox and removes a few letters.

One of them is a cream-colored envelope. The address is hand-written from M. R. Owen. Irma looks puzzled.

INT. BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

The Building Manager stands behind the counter. He sees Irma and waves.

BUILDING MANAGER

Feeling better?

IRMA

Yes, thank you.

He nods and Irma enters the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Irma presses 15 and the door closes. She looks up at the fluorescent light.

VISION

Irma lies on the round stretcher held by five FIREMEN who talk and laugh. She stares up at the light which becomes brighter and brighter.

BACK TO SCENE

Irma shakes herself.

INT. IRMA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Everything is just as she left it. Irma walks into the....

KITCHEN

The rigatoni, spaghetti sauce, meatballs and sausages are still on the stove. She stirs the rigatoni and it falls apart. The glass with Dr. Pepper is mostly water.

Irma moves into the....

LIVING ROOM

She looks around at the disorder - chairs and tables pushed to one side, books on the floor. She sits and looks at the mail in her hand. She holds the cream-colored envelope, smells it and smiles. She carefully opens it and finds a hand-written, cream-colored card.

INSERT - THE CARD, which reads:

Dearest Irma,

This is an invitation to Holmes Home.
We are a place of hope for one with a
'hopeless' problem.

You are a Beloved Child of the
Universe, Irma, and you deserve to be
happy, healthy and whole. We believe
we can help you.

M.R. Owen
R.S.V.P.
555-9770

BACK IN THE LIVING ROOM

As Irma reads the invitation, a look of sadness passes
across her face. She closes her eyes for a moment and sits
completely still.

She shakes her head, stands and begins to straighten up the
room.

INT. HOYNE'S REALTY - DAY

Irma sits at her desk and stares at the computer screen.
She googles 'gastric bypass operation'.

A picture of the stomach and intestines appears. Above the
stomach is a new, small stomach pouch where the food will
now be diverted.

Irma looks sad as she touches the small stomach pouch on
the screen. Then she moves her finger down to the big
bypassed stomach. She strokes it.

BOSS

Ninter!

Irma presses 'delete' and the screen goes blank.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Irma drives past St. Elizabeth's Hospital and slows down.

INT. SUV - NIGHT

Irma looks at the lights in the windows. She sees an ambulance pull up. She cries and drives away.

EXT. ROBERT'S MARKET - NIGHT

She approaches Robert's Market and parks. She sits for a moment.

She exits the SUV and slowly walks into the store.

INT. ROBERT'S MARKET - NIGHT

Irma stands in the pastry section and examines the cakes. She picks up a chocolate layer cake and walks to....

THE CHECKOUT

Irma sets the cake on the conveyor and watches it slowly move to the cashier.

It reaches the CASHIER who picks it up to scan it.

Irma lets out a big sigh.

IRMA

Never mind.

She walks past the cashier without the cake.

The cashier stares after her.

INT. BURGER KING - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Irma stands at the counter and looks up at the menu.

SERVER, 15, girl, watches Irma.

SERVER

What would you like?

IRMA
A double Whopper.

SERVER
Something else?

IRMA
With cheese and bacon.

SERVER
Anything to drink?

Irma looks at the picture of the chocolate shake.

IRMA
A Diet Coke.

INT. IRMA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Irma enters and turns on the light. She walks to the phone and dials.

IRMA
Hello, This Irma Ninter. I accept
your invitation.

She listens for a moment.

IRMA
How much does it cost?

She listens.

IRMA
Oh. Oh. That's very nice of you.

INT. IRMA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Irma packs a suitcase with clothes, two bags of Hershey's miniature bars and ten assorted candy bars.

Next to her bed is a large volume of Sherlock Holmes which she picks up and places in the suitcase. She glances over, sees the "Broker's Exam" and puts it itside. She closes the suitcase.

She walks to the mirror and brushes up her eyebrows with her pinkie.

She picks up her suitcase and moves into the....

KITCHEN

It is clean. Irma sets her suitcase down and opens the refrigerator. All that remains are condiments: mustard, ketsup, relish, mayonnaise and salad dressings. She runs her finger along the empty glass shelf. She opens the freezer and all that remains are ice cube trays. She takes a deep breath, releases it and closes the door.

She looks up and sees Amber's water bowl. She hesitates a moment. Then she grabs it, opens the cabinet and sets it inside.

She picks up her suitcase and walks into the....

LIVING ROOM

It is organized and clean. All the books are on the bookshelves.

Irma moves to the door and opens it. She stands in the doorway and looks over the room. She exits.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Irma stares out the window. As she passes the Jewel Store, she looks longingly at it.

She passes the bakery and closes her eyes and shakes her head.

EXT. LARGE PARK - DAY

A high black wrought iron fence surrounds a large park of trees, shrubs and flowers.

The taxi pulls up, and Irma opens the door. She lowers her feet and carefully exits. She pulls her suitcase behind her.

The taxi leaves, and Irma looks around. She walks to the gate.

Just then MR. OWEN, 60, appears. He is tall, slender and wears a pinstripe cutaway. Lots of fluffy white hair blows in the breeze. He opens the gate and smiles at Irma.

MR. OWEN

Welcome, Irma. Welcome to Holmes Home.

IRMA

Thank you, sir.

Irma enters the gate.

MR. OWEN

You may call me Mr. Owen, Irma.

Mr. Owen closes the gate.

IRMA

Oh. M. R. Owen. That's you.

MR. OWEN

Yes.

Mr. Owen and Irma walk down a path through the trees.

IRMA

How did you happen to invite me?

MR. OWEN

You have been a concern of ours for a long while, and now it is time.

IRMA

Oh.

Irma looks at him, not understanding.

IRMA

You're sure about the money?

MR. OWEN

It is our gift to you, Irma.

Mr. Owen smiles.

EXT. HOLMES HOME PARK - DAY

The Park covers many acres. Ponds, hillocks, trees and scattered houses fill the space.

Flowers and shrubs grow wild, and Irma stops to smell lilacs on a bush. Crows fly overhead and CAW-CAW as Mr. Owen and Irma continue on the path.

A small house appears ahead and Mr. Owen points to it.

MR. OWEN

That is where you will live for the next month.

Irma studies the house.

IRMA

Will I have it all to myself?

MR. OWEN

Yes.

Irma looks relieved.

IRMA

I worried about that.

MR. OWEN

You will have the privacy you need, Irma.

They reach the house and step up to the front porch. Mr. Owen opens the door.

MR. OWEN

Welcome home.

INT. IRMA'S HOUSE - DAY

They walk in. The room is light-filled and airy with a yellow couch, two large, yellow chairs and a silver chaise lounge. A kitchen table and chairs stand against the wall. Two doors lead from the room.

MR. OWEN

You may set your suitcase on the table.

Irma sets her suitcase down.

IRMA

It's nice in here. Light, spacious.

She looks up.

IRMA

High ceilings.

MR. OWEN

It will serve your purposes.
Please sit down, Irma.

Irma checks that the yellow chair is sturdy and lowers herself into it.

Mr. Owen sits on the couch. He smiles at her.

MR. OWEN

We are glad you decided to come to us.

IRMA

I think I'm glad too, Mr. Owen.

MR. OWEN

The old way had come to an end,
had it not?

Irma nods.

IRMA

That's a quaint way of saying it,
but 'yes', the old way ended.
With a plop.

Mr. Owens smiles.

MR. OWEN

We use a spiritual approach here
at Holmes to heal problems you and
the others face.

IRMA

The others? Who are they?

MR. OWEN

Six others are in this session.

IRMA

Oh. Are they all . . . do they
have my problem?

MR. OWEN

You will soon meet them.

IRMA

I was wondering about the diet -
the food I'll eat.

Irma looks around for a kitchen.

MR. OWEN

Yes, there will be food.

IRMA

What about a special diet? I mean
that's the problem - the food I
eat.

MR. OWEN

That is part of the problem. And
we begin right now to alleviate
it.

IRMA

Right now?

Mr. Owen nods and smiles. He looks gently and kindly at
her.

She takes a deep breath and relaxes.

MR. OWEN

Let us begin. We are each a spirit inside a physical body which we call a '*casing*' here at Holmes. We can leave this *casing* at will.

Irma looks skeptical.

MR. OWEN

Just suspend your disbelief and listen.

Irma looks away for a moment and then nods.

MR. OWEN

A *silvercord* connects the spirit to the *casing*. And the spirit can move and travel far away from the *casing*, and still remain connected.

Mr. Owen stops and watches her.

Irma scrunches her forehead and tries to picture it.

MR. OWEN

All right?

IRMA

I've never heard about this before.

MR. OWEN

Now, Irma, if one does not inhabit a physical body, there is no way to satisfy the craving to eat. Or for that matter to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol or ingest a drug.

IRMA

So what are you saying?

MR. OWEN

That by leaving your body, you will not be able to satisfy the urge to eat. And in time the urges will disappear.

IRMA

But I do have a body. That's the problem. The big problem.

MR. OWEN

I am going to teach you to leave your body, Irma.

Irma looks afraid, what did she get herself into? She looks around and at the door. She prepares to stand.

MR. OWEN

It is all right, Irma. Completely safe.

IRMA

Sez you.

MR. OWEN

Yes, sez I.

IRMA

I don't believe you. This is crazy. Are you crazy?

MR. OWEN

Would you like to see?

Irma crosses her arms in front of her.

IRMA

Not with my body.

MR. OWEN

With mine.

IRMA

You can leave your body?

MR. OWEN

Shall I show you?

Irma looks at him.

Then she looks outside as a squirrel climbs up a tree.

She looks back at him and wonders what to do.

IRMA

Okay, show me.

Irma squeezes her hands together and watches carefully.

Mr. Owen sits on the couch as his spirit leaves his *casing* through a point in the center of his forehead.

Irma SHRIEKS.

Mr. Owen's *casing* sits immobile on the couch. His spirit walks around the room. A *silvercord*, thin, faint and shimmering, extends from the forehead of his *casing* to the back of the neck of his spirit body. Mr. Owen in spirit looks identical to Mr. Owen in *casing*.

Irma sits open-mouthed and watches him.

IRMA

Are you still here, Mr. Owen?

MR. OWEN

Still here, Irma.

IRMA

Ohmygoodness. Can you go back in
. . . now?

Mr. Owen's spirit reenters his *casing* through the forehead. The *casing* reanimates.

MR. OWEN

Here I am.

IRMA

I never saw anything . . .

Mr. Owen nods sympathetically.

MR. OWEN

I know, Irma.

Irma watches him, relaxes a little and looks around.

IRMA

And you think I can do that?

Mr. Owen nods.

MR. OWEN

I know you can.

IRMA

And you expect . . . Even if I could . . . I'm not coming out of myself.

MR. OWEN

That's not yourself, Irma. It's your *casing* for this lifetime, this incarnation.

IRMA

Sez you.

MR. OWEN

Sez I.

IRMA

If I do that, where will I be?

MR. OWEN

In spirit. Your spirit is yourself.

Irma shakes her head.

IRMA

Nobody ever talked about this.

MR. OWEN

I know, Irma. Most people do not know.

IRMA

Could you step out again?

Mr. Owen leaves his *casing*.

IRMA

Can I touch you?

MR. OWEN

Yes.

Irma stands and touches his *casing's* nose.

Instantaneously Mr. Owen enters his body and wiggles his nose.

Irma gasps.

Mr. Owen laughs and winks at her.

MR. OWEN

I am just teasing you, Irma.

Irma looks at him and smiles a little.

MR. OWEN

Are you ready to begin?

IRMA

I . . . I

She looks like she's going to cry.

Mr. Owen lightly touches her forehead with his middle finger.

MR. OWEN

Now, Irma, take a nice deep breath
and close your eyes.

Mr. Owen closes his eyes.

Irma watches him for a moment, then she closes hers.

MR. OWEN

Allow a wave of relaxation to
spread throughout your entire
body. Start at your feet and move
up, up, up to your head.

Irma relaxes.

MR. OWEN

It is so pleasant just to relax
like this.

Mr. Owen opens his eyes and watches her.

MR. OWEN

Now surround your self with a pure
white light. This light permeates
you and travels with you.

Irma breathes and sits still.

Mr. Owen's voice becomes softer, quieter.

MR. OWEN

Direct your attention to a spot on
your forehead.

He pauses.

MR. OWEN

And now allow your conscious mind
to move out of your body at this
point.

Irma looks intent.

MR. OWEN

Just allow yourself to slip out of
your body.

A few moments pass.

A form emerges from Irma's forehead. Then Irma is out of her body. Her spirit stands in front of her *casing*. A *silvercord* extends from the forehead of her *casing* to the back of the neck of her spirit body.

She is unrecognizable: slender, curly dark hair, white pants and blouse. She looks fresh, unburdened by her *casing*.

Mr. Owen smiles at her.

MR. OWEN

Good, Irma.

Irma, in spirit, looks at him and at herself. She stands and moves around. She walks effortlessly and moves her arms back and forth. She lifts each leg up as easily as a ballerina. She even makes a little jump.

She looks at her *casing* which sits immobile in the chair. She touches its forehead where the *silvercord* emerges. Then she closes her eyes for a moment.

MR. OWEN

Excellent.

Mr. Owen stands.

MR. OWEN

Each day you will be required to reenter your *casing*, Irma. You will eat a nutritious meal. You will bathe, eliminate and exercise your body.

Mr. Owen moves to one of the doors and opens it to an enclosed yard.

Irma stands next to him.

They look into a yard of flowers and a large elm tree.

A long staircase leads up to a platform with two planters of red peonies and a small saguaro cactus.

MR. OWEN

You will spend an hour each day moving your body. Walking around the yard and climbing the stairs.

IRMA

I never did that in the world. There were elevators and no time.

MR. OWEN

Here there is time, Irma. And no elevators.

Mr. Owen and Irma move back into the living room.

Irma opens the second door to a bathroom. She looks at Mr. Owen.

IRMA

There's no kitchen.

MR. OWEN

All that you require will be provided.

Irma looks around the room.

MR. OWEN

Do you have any questions?

Irma shrugs.

IRMA

I'm so light. I could fly away.

MR. OWEN

You can. Are you ready to explore the grounds?

Irma looks back at her casing.

IRMA

Is my *casing* safe. Do I just leave her here?

MR. OWEN

No one can enter without your permission. This is your key.

He hands her a long gold KEY on a yellow RIBBON. Irma looks at it and hangs it around her neck.

She walks to the front door.

MR. OWEN

Just one more thing. Will you open your suitcase?

Irma looks at him suspiciously.

IRMA

Why?

MR. OWEN

We want you to make a good beginning, Irma.

Reluctantly, Irma opens her suitcase.

Mr. Owen looks at the candy. He opens a cupboard and removes a bag. He hands it to Irma.

MR. OWEN

Please place it in here.

IRMA

All of it? I need something.

MR. OWEN

You are fine just as you are.

Irma drops the two bags of candy and the loose candy bars into the bag.

Mr. Owen smiles at Irma.

MR. OWEN

Quite a variety.

Irma stares at the candy.

IRMA

Did anyone else bring ... stuff?

Mr. Owen laughs.

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - MR. OWEN COLLECTS CONTRABAND

INT. MATT'S HOUSE - DAY

A pair of male hands opens a drawer and removes five sex magazines.

MATT (O.S.)

But I need those!

INT. LISETTE'S HOUSE - DAY

A pair of female hands opens a purse and removes a bottle of Xanax.

LISETTE (O.S.)

Just leave me two, okay?

INT. GABRIEL'S HOUSE - DAY

A male hand digs in a suitcase and pulls out a voodoo doll with a white and a black pin stuck in it.

GABRIEL (O.S.)

Must you take it?

INT. DOUG'S HOUSE - DAY

A pair of male hands reaches into a suitcase and removes a pint bottle of vodka.

DOUG (O.S.)

That's all I've got. You can't take it.

MR. OWEN (O.S.)

Is there not something more?

Male hands reach deep into a suitcase and removes a bottle of cough syrup.

DOUG (O.S.)

What if I get a cough?

INT. PATTI'S HOUSE - DAY

A female hand opens the medicine cabinet and removes two joints of marijuana.

PATTI (O.S.)

It's just to relax. That's all.

MR. OWEN (O.S.)

Those also.

A female hand picks up "Vogue" and "Elle" fashion magazines.

PATTI (O.S.)

What's wrong with those?

INT. MARTIN'S HOUSE - DAY

A pair of male hands opens a drawer and removes a carton of Marlboros.

MARTIN (O.S.)

Do you really have to take all of them?

MR. OWEN (O.S.)

Something else?

The male hands produce a bag of Bugler roll-your own.

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

MR. OWEN

Oh, yes. They always do.

Mr. Owen speaks in a soothing, almost hypnotic voice.

MR. OWEN

All is well, Irma. You are complete just as you are.

IRMA

I don't know.

MR. OWEN

I do.

Irma hands him the bag and bows her head.

IRMA

I hope you're right, Mr. Owen.

Mr. Owen moves to the front door.

MR. OWEN

Now it is time to meet the others.

EXT. IRMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Mr. Owen and Irma step onto . . .

THE FRONT PORCH

Irma locks the door.

IRMA

Who are they?

MR. OWEN

You will see.

IRMA

What's the matter with them?

MR. OWEN

I will allow them to tell you
that.

EXT. THE PARK - DAY

They walk along a path into the park.

SPIRIT WORKERS, genderless, ageless, wearing light-colored robes of pink, green, blue, yellow, violet, walk among the trees. They wave to Irma.

IRMA

Who are they?

MR. OWEN

Spirit Workers.

She stares at them.

IRMA

What do they do?

MR. OWEN

They are here to assist you in
your healing. Just call and they
will come.

At a fork in the road, Mr. Owen and Irma separate.

She continues down the path and looks up at some oak trees.

MATT, 28, 6'4", 240 pounds, in spirit with the *silvercord* at his neck stretching behind him, appears suddenly. He is a big, friendly blue-collar guy.

MATT

Yo, would you like a tour?

Irma, startled, backs off.

IRMA

Where did you come from?

Matt points into the distance.

MATT

Over there.

IRMA

How did you get here?

MATT

I thought it.

IRMA

How?

MATT

You can do it.

He points to an apple tree a few yards away.

MATT

Just think yourself by the tree.

Irma looks at the tree, closes her eyes and tenses her face.

MATT

You don't have to do that. Just imagine you're there.

Irma relaxes her face, looks at the tree and disappears.

MATT

That's it.

Irma stands by the apple tree.

Matt disappears.

He appears at the apple tree.

IRMA

It's so easy.

Matt nods.

IRMA

Almost too easy. What if you fly
away?

Matt looks over at a tall red maple tree. He disappears.

Irma looks around.

MATT (O.S.)

Yo! Hey down there!

She looks up and spots him.

Matt sits on a top branch of the red maple.

Irma's eyes widen.

MATT

Come on up.

Irma looks horrified.

IRMA

No thanks.

MATT

What's the matter? You can't hurt
yourself.

Irma walks around the tree.

IRMA

You must be forty feet in the air.
On one thin branch.

MATT

That's freedom, huh?

She remembers and looks down at her new, thin body.

IRMA

I guess so.

GABRIEL, 40, appears in spirit. He is multi-racial, wears black pants, a black tee and has shoulder-length black hair. He looks and walks like a panther or a flamenco dancer.

He seems surprised to see Irma and stares at her.

Irma jumps.

GABRIEL

We've been waiting for you.

Matt appears on the ground.

MATT

I've been showing her around.
We'll be there soon. You can go.

Gabriel ignores Matt.

GABRIEL

I'm Gabriel. And you are . . .

IRMA

Irma.

Matt turns to her.

MATT

I'm Matt. Come on, let's finish
the tour.

Irma is suddenly nervous at all the attention.

GABRIEL

(smiles)
My friend Irma?

MATT

What?

IRMA

My Friend Irma - a radio program
my grandmother listened to.
That's what she called me - my
friend Irma.

Gabriel nods.

MARTIN, 50, in spirit, gay, with brown wavy hair, wearing a
flowered shirt and shorts appears.

MARTIN

Well, there you are. We heard
you'd arrived. We were waiting
for you.

Irma relaxes at Martin's arrival.

IRMA

Am I the last one?

Gabriel nods.

GABRIEL

Now we can begin.

As the four of them move away, Matt inserts himself between
Irma and Gabriel.

A small, white marble cathedral appears in the distance.

They approach it.

MATT

This is where we meet.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

The large space is bright with light from many windows. In
the middle is a circle of red chairs.

LISETTE, 22, African-American, wears an Afro. She talks
with PATTI, 39, with red hair and freckles. They are in
spirit with their *silvercords* trailing them.

Martin, hurries over to them.

MARTIN

We found her.

Gabriel stares at Irma; Matt watches Gabriel; Patti looks at Gabriel watching Irma.

Lisette laughs with Martin.

DOUG, 35, in spirit, hippie-looking with long hair, stands by himself with a big dark spot in the trunk of his spirit body.

Irma looks around at all the people and suddenly panics.

Mr. Owen arrives and she relaxes. The Group approaches him, and he smiles at each one.

MR. OWEN

Welcome to Holmes. This is our sacred space. It has been cleared of all that came before and consecrated for the work you will do within its walls.

They nod and look around.

Mr. Owen walks around the space, and the Group follows him.

MR. OWEN

You will remain in spirit with each other until the time is right for you to meet in your *casings*.

Irma looks around at the others.

MR. OWEN

And if we deem it helpful, you might inhabit each others' *casings*.

MATT

Inside a woman!

He glances at Irma.

Irma looks horrified.

Gabriel watches Matt, looks distastefully at him.

MARTIN

Are you serious?

LISETTE

Not in my *casing*.

Mr. Owen looks around at them.

MR. OWEN

Nothing will occur without your
permission.

Mr. Owen moves to the chairs.

MR. OWEN

You will all sit, please.

They move to the chairs.

Irma checks the chair to see if it will hold her. Then she
smiles at herself and sits easily.

They all sit.

MR. OWEN

Before we begin, we have some
business to attend to.

Mr. Owen looks at Doug.

MR. OWEN

Douglas, please step into the
middle.

Doug looks uncomfortable but stands up in the middle of the
circle. The dark spot looks darker.

MR. OWEN

You have brought someone with you,
uninvited.

Doug looks puzzled and shakes his head.

Mr. Owen points at the dark spot in Doug's spirit.

MR. OWEN

Step out! Step out now!

The dark spot moves around in Doug and a human shape forms.

Slowly the spirit of LEWIS, an elderly black man, dressed in a tan 1960's suit and bow-tie, emerges from Doug's spirit. He has no *silvercord*.

The group looks shocked.

Doug looks the most shocked. He shakes himself all over as if to rid himself of the old Man.

MR. OWEN

By your alcoholic drinking,
Douglas, you left yourself open
for a discarnate entity to enter
and partake of your --

DOUG

What did I do?

MR. OWEN

He's been with you for quite a
while. Large quantities of
alcohol made your spirit porous
and allowed another entity to
inhabit you.

DOUG

(to Lewis)

Who are you?

The old black Man looks at Doug and Mr. Owen and LAUGHS out loud.

LEWIS

Just call me Lewis.

He whips out a harmonica and PLAYS a little Blues tune.

Irma and Patti laugh. Then Martin and Lisette join in, and soon everyone is laughing except Doug who sits and watches Lewis.

Doug points to Lewis.

DOUG

How come he doesn't have a silvercord?

Everyone looks at Lewis.

MARTIN

I didn't notice that.

MR. OWEN

Lewis died.

He looks at Lewis.

MR. OWEN

About fifty years ago?

Lewis nods.

MR. OWEN

At the moment of physical death, when the spirit leaves the body, the *silvercord* is severed.

MATT

What if someone cuts mine, will I die?

Mr. Owen laughs heartily.

MR. OWEN

Oh, no, no.

MARTIN

That occurred to me too.

They wait for Mr. Owen to stop laughing.

MR. OWEN

Your *silvercord* is indestructible,
as long as your physical body is
alive. When you die, it detaches,
and your spirit goes free.

IRMA

So no one can cut anyone else's
silvercord?

MR. OWEN

Correct.

PATTI

They look so fragile.

LISETTE

What if you murdered someone?

MR. OWEN

Their *silvercord* would sever.

IRMA

Or suicide?

Mr. Owen nods.

Doug points to Lewis.

DOUG

So what about him?

Lewis PLAYS another tune.

LEWIS

You still my main man.

Doug looks at Mr. Owen.

MR. OWEN

He'll be with us for awhile.

Mr. Owen nods at Lewis who moves out of the circle.

MR. OWEN

You have each been chosen to come to Holmes for personal reasons and to make up this group. You may discover them or not. Some of you may want to know and others - well.

MARTIN

But why leave the body, the *casing*?

MR. OWEN

To facilitate what you came to do. Destructive urges lessen outside the *casing*. Not disappear completely, that will take time.

DOUG

Look what disappeared out of me.

MR. OWEN

It will also show the true purpose of the *casing* - simply a container, although a holy one, for your spirit in this lifetime.

Patti looks surprised.

MR. OWEN

And when you complete this lifetime, you will leave it behind, its usefulness at an end.

Patti shakes her head.

MR. OWEN

That should be of special interest to some of you.

Mr. Owen looks at Patti and Lisette, and they meet his eyes.

MR. OWEN

Others probably wish they could
dispense with it immediately.

He looks at Irma, and she looks away.

MR. OWEN

And others believe it is
indispensable to their lives'...
activities.

He looks at Martin, Matt and Doug, who look at each other.

Lewis PLAYS a rollicking tune.

MR. OWEN

And one who does not honor his
holy *casing*.

He looks at Gabriel who stares off.

MR. OWEN

We will gather each day in this
sanctum sanctorum. You will do
your parts and I will do mine.

MATT

How long will all this take?

MR. OWEN

You have each committed to a
month.

As Mr. Owen looks around at everyone, his face assumes
AFRICAN-AMERICAN features.

The group notices his facial transformation.

IRMA

Your face ...?

LISETTE

What are you, black or white?

MR. OWEN

Your guide here at Holmes and...
perhaps beyond.

DOUG
After Holmes?

MR. OWEN
We'll see.

Matt squirms in his chair and seems edgy.

MATT
What do we do at night?

MR. OWEN
Ah, yes, the night. A most
difficult time for many if not all
of you.

IRMA
It is for me.

DOUG
Me too.

MATT
Yeah.

The others nod.

MR. OWEN
Night is a time of regeneration.
To process your experiences.

Matt looks impatient.

MATT
So?

MR. OWEN
Your spirit can travel to other
realms and encounter new ways of
being.

MATT
But what do we DO?

MR. OWEN

You will remain out of *casing* and let it rest. In spirit you can rest in the long chair or travel to other realms. It is up to you.

MATT

You mean the one that looks like a chaise lounge.

Mr. Owen nods.

IRMA

How will it help?

MARTIN

What does it do?

Mr. Owen looks placid.

MR. OWEN

I would rather you experience it.

LISETTE

Is it going to hurt?

Mr. Owen shakes his head.

Matt shrugs and sits back.

MR. OWEN

Now. You will each share a reflection of deep meaning for you, something you believe in.

MATT

Do you want us to say why we're here?

MR. OWEN

Do you know why you are here?

MATT

I was invited.

MR. OWEN

As you all were.

Patti looks around. No one looks as if they're going to speak.

PATTI

Beauty. It's the most important thing in the world. If you're beautiful, you have a happy life. You get everything you want.

Irma's mouth drops open.

MATT

You believe that?

MR. OWEN

What is something you believe in, Matt?

MATT

Electricity. It's the most beautiful thing in the world. It always gets what it wants.

PATTI

Are you making fun of me?

Matt laughs.

Everyone looks at him, and no one laughs.

Matt shrugs.

MARTIN

Books are important to me. Everything, mostly everything, I ever learned was from books. They never hurt you or lie to you, except the ones that do and you throw those away. Books are your best friends.

Irma nods.

IRMA

They're my best friends. When I saw this place was called Holmes, I took it as a sign.

DOUG

Of what?

IRMA

Well, Sherlock Holmes, of course.

Doug, confused, looks around at everyone.

LISETTE

(to Martin)

That's a trip.

MARTIN

It's my trip. What's yours?

Lisette fidgets in her seat.

LISETTE

Oh. Uh. Yeah. Okay, okay. Sure. You're all older than me. You got a head start.

No one says anything.

LISETTE

Okay. My mother. I believe in my Mama. I always have. But ...

PATTI

What?

LISETTE

She always wanted me to do things like...

MARTIN

Like...?

She looks at Gabriel.

LISETTE

Like white people.

She looks at Mr. Owen.

LISETTE

She acted like I was white.

MARTIN

In 2008?

LISETTE

My Mama was born in 1950.
Philadelphia, Mississippi.

Martin nods.

MARTIN

I see.

She looks around defiantly, but sees no one is laughing.
She relaxes a little.

DOUG

The workers at the homeless
shelter. I don't know why they
show up day after day,
Thanksgiving, Christmas, Sunday,
Tuesday. That's a trip.

He slumps back in his chair.

IRMA

I'm studying for the Broker's
Exam. My boss doesn't think I can
do it.

DOUG

Why not?

She shrugs.

IRMA

It's my dream to open my own real estate company. The look on someone's face when I help them find their new home. I've never taken drugs, but the feeling I get is out of this world.

MATT

So you're a real estate lady.

Irma nods.

They look around at each other. Then all eyes go to Gabriel.

He stares off.

MR. OWEN

Go ahead, Gabriel.

GABRIEL

A pretty woman.

He glances at Irma.

She looks stricken.

GABRIEL

Ugly women are so . . . ugly.

Patti stares at him, nods, hanging on his words.

GABRIEL

But looking at a pretty woman makes me feel happy, alive.

He has a beautiful smile.

The group looks to Mr. Owen.

MR. OWEN

Now I would like you all to join me in the meadow.

DOUG

What for?

MR. OWEN
You are going to be given
experiences, tests and
opportunities here at Holmes to
heal and clear yourselves. Come.

Mr. Owen smiles and leaves.

EXT. HOLMES PARK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Spirit Workers, walk among the trees and flowers.

The cathedral door opens and the group exits.

The Spirit Workers wave at them.

GABRIEL
We're all still here. I wondered
if anyone would find it too
difficult to stay.

MATT
You mean me, don't you?

Gabriel looks surprised.

GABRIEL
Why would you think that?

MATT
Nothing gets to you, does it.

Gabriel studies him.

GABRIEL
You don't.

PATTI
(to Matt)
What's the matter with you?

MARTIN
I hope I'm going to like it here.

They walk through the park.

PATTI

I wonder if we're allowed to
invite each other to our houses?

Irma looks at her apprehensively.

Gabriel studies Irma and smiles.

MATT

I think we can do whatever we
want.

PATTI

Mr. Owen probably would've told us
if we couldn't.

MARTIN

I always had people over.
Besides, there's no T.V.s, radios,
newspapers here.

GABRIEL

I think we're supposed to examine
our lives.

LISETTE

And we don't know anything about
each other.

The group moves through the park.

MATT

Do we want to?

PATTI

Who're you talking about?

Matt glances at Gabriel.

PATTI

(to Matt)

So why are you here?

For the first time, Matt looks defensive.

MATT

I don't think I . . . why are you here?

PATTI

I asked you first.

Martin looks at them.

MARTIN

I'm here because I smoke four packs of cigarettes a day. And I can't stop.

DOUG

Wow! That's a lot.

MATT

That's like ... like ... five every hour ... one every twelve minutes. If you're up for sixteen hours?

Martin shrugs.

PATTI

I'm surprised you can still breathe.

Martin doesn't reply but is worried.

Irma moves toward Martin.

IRMA

That was brave, to say why you're here.

MARTIN

Why are you here?

IRMA

I'm not that brave. Yet.

They walk down a path that runs along a small creek.

MATT

We know why Doug's here.

GABRIEL

Do you?

Matt picks up a stone and pitches it in the water.

IRMA

My father and I used to throw
stones in the pond and watch the
ripples.

Matt looks at her.

MATT

Like this?

He throws another stone and the ripples spread out.

She stares at the ripples.

FLASHBACK - IRMA AS A CHILD

IRMA, 5, and her FATHER stand by a pond. He throws a
stone, and as it hits the water, the ripples move out from
the center where her father's face appears. At first it is
small, then it gets bigger and bigger until Little Irma
SCREAMS.

BACK TO SCENE

Irma looks around, and they are all watching her.

IRMA

Are we at the meadow yet?

A meadow full of dandelions is just ahead. Mr. Owen stands
in the middle of it.

They all move to him.

MR. OWEN

You may sit in a circle.

They all sit in a big circle around Mr. Owen.

MR. OWEN

Because of your difficulties, you each keep yourself apart from others. And keeping apart causes more difficulties which keeps you farther apart which causes even more difficulties. You see?

DOUG

Catch twenty-two, hunh?

IRMA

People don't understand.

MATT

You got that right.

GABRIEL

I listen to them when they come to me for readings.

PATTI

Readings?

GABRIEL

When I read the cards.

MATT

Cards? What cards?

He peers at Gabriel.

GABRIEL

The Tarot.

MATT

(laughs)

Oh, fortune-telling.

Gabriel calmly watches him.

PATTI

Will you read my cards?

MARTIN

I'd love to have mine read.

MATT
(a high voice)
Oh, will you read mine too?

Gabriel holds his hands up - stop!

Mr. Owen stands.

MR. OWEN
Your differences will soon become
more similar.

He extends his left hand, palm up, and a small ball of glowing, multi-colored 'yarn' appears on it. The ball grows larger until it is the size of a softball.

Mr. Owen walks outside of the circle.

MR. OWEN
You will need to move very close
to each other.

They look at each other and slowly, reluctantly move up against one another. Irma is next to Gabriel and Matt is across the circle next to Martin.

MR. OWEN
Douglas, you will begin. Hold
onto the end of the Concordia Ball
and throw the ball to someone. As
you do, speak a word of concordia
to them.

DOUG
What?

MR. OWEN
Harmony. Like this.

Mr. Owen tosses the ball to Doug.

MR. OWEN
Adventure.

Doug looks pleased and catches it. He wraps the end around his arm. He throws the ball to Lisette.

DOUG

Fun. Let's have fun.

Lisette catches it and pulls the strand around her wrist. She throws it to Patti.

LISETTE

It takes courage.

Patti smiles, winds the yarn around her ankle and throws it to Martin.

PATTI

Intelligence can be fun.

Martin smiles and catches it. He winds the yarn around his arm and throws it to Matt.

MARTIN

In strength is power.

Matt grins, catches it, strings it around his leg and tosses the ball to Irma.

MATT

Be kind to your web-footed friends.

Irma laughs and catches the ball, wraps the yarn around her arm and throws it to Gabriel.

IRMA

And what about intuition?

Gabriel catches the ball, wraps it around his leg and throws it to Lisette.

GABRIEL

Never give up.

The group is slowly connected with the string of multi-colored light.

Lisette catches it, winds it around her waist and throws it to Doug.

LISETTE

It's still fun.

Doug catches it, throws it into the air, catches it and throws it to Irma.

DOUG

Cock-a-doodle-doo!

Irma catches it, wraps it around her shoulders and throws it to Patti.

IRMA

It gets easier.

Patti catches it, wraps it around her legs and throws it to Matt.

PATTI

Let's play.

Matt catches it and twirls it before wrapping it around his chest. He tosses it to Martin

MATT

If I can help.

Martin catches it, wraps it around him and Lisette. He throws it to Gabriel.

MARTIN

Deep, deeper, deepest.

As Gabriel tries to catch the ball, it moves faster and faster as it wraps itself around the group in a blur of color and light. Finally the ball is used up. The group is a huge ball of color and glows with energy. All is still.

MR. OWEN (O.S.)

Now you are one. Remember this.
(whispers) Remember.

IRMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Irma enters. Her *casing* sits in the chair. She pulls up a chair and sits across from it. She looks at the face, peaceful and still.

IRMA

What does it feel like to stop eating. To just sit there and do nothing?

Her face looks back at her.

IRMA

You feel sorry for me, don't you.

The face smiles.

IRMA

I feel sorry for you too. We have a decision to make.

Her *casing* looks interested.

IRMA

We can't go on without each other, you know?

Her *casing* listens patiently.

IRMA

We need each other.

Her *casing* agrees.

IRMA

You're nodding your head, aren't you?

Irma nods her head.

IRMA

If I don't go back inside, you know what happens?

Her *casing* looks wise.

IRMA

What should I do?

Her *casing* looks concerned.

A KNOCK on the door.

Irma looks around terrified. Will someone see her?

A second KNOCK.

IRMA

Who is it?

MR. OWEN

Mr. Owen, Irma.

IRMA

Oh.

Irma relaxes and opens the door.

Mr. Owen smiles and enters.

MR. OWEN

Good evening, Irma. I came to see
if you needed anything.

IRMA

I was getting ready to enter my
bod-, my *casing*.

Mr. Owen and Irma stand and look at Irma's *casing*.

IRMA

She seems peaceful. I wish I
could be like that.

MR. OWEN

Well, well. We will see about
that. Do you need help
reentering?

Irma touches the forehead with her middle finger the way Mr Owen did. She closes her eyes and focuses. Then her spirit flows inside her *casing* through her forehead.

Irma's *casing* comes to life. She looks around and up at Mr. Owen.

He nods and smiles down at her.

MR. OWEN

Excellent, Irma. You are on your way.

Irma looks at him and down at her *casing*. She shakes her head.

IRMA

I don't feel as hopeful as you. Look at me, Mr. Owen. They wanted to know why I was here. How in the world could I tell them?

MR. OWEN

When it is time, it will be time. You have much to think about and much to do.

Irma nods.

A soft RAP on the door.

Irma jumps.

MR. OWEN

Your dinner is here.

Mr. Owen opens the door to a blue-robed Spirit Worker.

He enters and places a tray with food on the table. He looks at Irma and gently bows his head and exits.

MR. OWEN

I will leave you now, Irma. Enjoy your dinner.

Mr. Owen exits.

Irma rises and moves to the table. She uncovers the plate and steam rises from the chicken, potatoes and peas & carrots. She is shocked at the small portions.

She stirs the gravy with her finger and tastes it. A look of pleasure fills her face.

She uncovers a dish which holds a small piece of chocolate cake with chocolate frosting. She looks at it and begins to cry. She covers it up.

She rises and walks and cries. Finally she stops and is quiet for a moment. She takes a deep breath.

She moves to the table, sits, and places a white cloth napkin on her lap. She forks mashed potatoes into her mouth and takes time to taste it.

She picks up a drumstick and takes a bite. She looks at the cake. She eats some peas & carrots. She stops, sits and takes a breath. She uncovers the salad and has a bite of it.

IRMA

Okay. Okay. I'm okay.

Irma finishes everything but the cake. She stares at it then cuts off a small piece. She puts it in her mouth and closes her eyes in bliss.

Then she cuts another small bite.

When she finishes, she wipes her mouth with the napkin.

She drinks coffee in a relaxed manner. A slight smile appears on her face.

A KNOCK on the door.

MATT

Irma, yo, would you like to take a walk?

Irma looks scared.

IRMA

Not tonight.

MATT

You sure?

IRMA

I'm sure.

MATT

Maybe tomorrow?

She shakes her head.

She rises and opens the back door.

EXT. IRMA'S BACK YARD - NIGHT

Irma begins to walk slowly around the yard. She checks her watch - 8:15. She continues walking around the yard. She looks at the stairs but does not attempt them.

The watch says 8:30, and she stops and stands still. She wipes perspiration from her forehead.

INT. IRMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A clock on the wall shows 3:00.

Irma, in spirit, paces.

IRMA

(to her *casing*)

I want to eat. I can't stand it.
How can I be so hungry. In my
spirit?

She stops pacing.

IRMA

I'm not. But I want to eat.

Her *casing* looks at her calmly.

IRMA

I need a Snicker's bar. Dark
Milky Way. M & M's. Help me.
Help me.

Irma opens the cupboard and rummages around in it.

IRMA

There was candy in my own cupboard.

She sobs. She puts her fingers into her mouth and bites down on them.

She looks at her *casing*.

IRMA

I don't think I can do this. It's too hard.

It looks sympathetically at Irma.

She sucks on her fingers.

She spots the silver chaise lounge and moves to it. On the wall above it, a small sign reads:

INSERT - THE SIGN, which reads:

"Rest In Your Spirit"

BACK IN THE ROOM

Irma reads the sign and touches the chaise lounge. She feels something in her hand and looks puzzled.

She touches the chaise with both hands, again feels something, and flexes her fingers.

She looks at her *casing* as if for guidance.

Irma, in spirit, sits on the chaise lounge. She stretches her legs in front of her and lies back.

Her body expands a little as it fills with energy. She undulates slightly as the energy flows through her.

She closes her eyes and lies completely still.

Her *casing* looks at her.

EXT. IRMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Irma in spirit leaves her house. She looks refreshed and skips along.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

The group and Mr. Owen sit around the circle.

Lewis stands outside the circle and PLAYS a Blues tune to Doug.

Doug keeps looking over at him.

Mr. Owen shakes his head to Lewis and Lewis stops playing.

MR. OWEN

Congratulations on your first day at Holmes. Would anyone like to tell us . . . anything?

MARTIN

I was worried I wouldn't know what to do without my cigarettes. But after eating that delicious chateau briand, I was able to relax, a little.

Irma looks up as he mentions the chateau briand.

IRMA

I sat in the chaise lounge.

MARTIN

I touched it.

IRMA

I don't know what it did . . . but I feel refreshed, stronger. You know like maybe I can do this.

DOUG

I relaxed in it.

Mr. Owen looks at them.

MR. OWEN

The long chair will cleanse your energy, flush worry and fear from your spirit. And harmonize the thoughts that would urge you to use other means.

MATT

Can I take it home?

Mr. Owen smiles at him.

PATTI

Some of us went for a walk.

MATT

(to Lisette)

What happened to you?

LISETTE

Oh, I, um, I don't know.

MR. OWEN

You do not like to walk, Lisette?

LISETTE

No, I, uh, I ... I don't think I belong here.

Matt laughs.

They all look at him.

MATT

It's funny. I think it's funny.

LISETTE

What, that I don't belong here?
What do you know about me?

MATT

I don't know anything about anybody. Except Martin. He's gonna die from smoking.

Patti and Irma gasp.

PATTI

We know about you.

MATT

What, what do you know about me?

They dismiss him and look away.

GABRIEL

(to Matt)

Tell us what you're here for.

MATT

I'm not ready. I don't know you.

MR. OWEN

How will you get to know us, Matt?

Matt looks around at everyone.

MATT

You tell me about you and I'll
tell you about me. That's fair.

IRMA

What if we're not ready?

Gabriel watches Irma.

DOUG

I'm not. But I've already been
busted so . . . it doesn't matter.

PATTI

So why are you here?

DOUG

You saw what I brought with me.

He looks over at Lewis.

Lewis stands nonchalantly and give him a casual salute.

DOUG

He probably knows me better than
anyone. Even me.

He looks at Lewis again.

DOUG

So what am I like, old man?

LEWIS

You a cool guy. We had a blast,
man. I never knew a man drink
like that. Even when I was a- ...
well, you know.

Doug looks around.

DOUG

I'm a blast. Now you know.

GABRIEL

Maybe we're all a blast.

Gabriel gets up and walks around.

MATT

Maybe we oughta blast off and get
this thing going.

GABRIEL

What if some things are so deep,
we can't even blast them out?

MR. OWEN

Are you talking about yourself,
Gabriel?

Gabriel looks at Irma.

GABRIEL

That's what it feels like. No
help. No hope. Nothing.

Irma nods in agreement.

IRMA

I feel like that.

PATTI

So do I.

Lisette looks around and shakes her head.

LISETTE

I'm too young to feel that way.

MARTIN

What, hopeless? You're never too young to feel hopeless.

LISETTE

Hey, when I get to be as old as some of you guys, and if I'm still doin' what I'm doin' . . . yeah, I'll feel hopeless.

MATT

Oh man.

DOUG

So why is all this going to change anything?

Mr. Owen stands and walks around the group.

His face assumes NATIVE-AMERICAN features and color.

They all watch him.

IRMA

Why do you do that?

Mr. Owen smiles at her.

Mr. Owen stops behind Patti and touches her on the top of her head.

PATTI

I'm here because . . . because I'm so ugly and I'll never be pretty.

Everyone looks at her.

GABRIEL

But you're pretty.

PATTI

I'm not. You should really see me.

DOUG

You should see me. I'm a wreck.
Thirty-five and I look fifty. I
can't stop drinking.

Irma takes courage from him.

IRMA

I can't stop either. Eating.
Sweet stuff. And I don't want you
to see me. I said it.

She bites her lip.

Gabriel looks at her knowingly.

DOUG

(to Patti)
How old are you?

PATTI

I'll be thirty-five next December 23rd.

Mr. Owen looks at her inquisitively.

Patti looks at him and around at the group.

PATTI

Actually I'm thirty-nine. I can't
turn forty. How can I when I feel
twenty-five?

MARTIN

Actually, you're in your fortieth
year.

PATTI

Ahhhhhh.

DOUG

What's the big dif between thirty-
five and thirty-nine and forty?

MARTIN

It's not thirty-nine. It's forty.

Lisette smiles and shakes her head at Doug.

LISETTE

She's afraid of forty.

PATTI

(to Lisette)

Just wait till you get there. You won't sound so glib.

MARTIN

I just turned ... I can hardly say it. Fifty. I was in a restaurant on my birthday, and I fainted.

PATTI

I work as a court reporter. I listen to women left by men their age who want younger women.

Patti looks at Mr. Owen.

PATTI

Who's going to want me after thirty-five? I don't even have a husband.

Mr. Owen continues around the circle. He stops at Gabriel and touches him on the top of his head.

GABRIEL

I'm a thief. I'll steal anything you have.

He glances at Irma to see her response.

MATT

Lucky we don't have anything here.

Gabriel looks at him and laughs.

IRMA

(to Matt)

Why did you come?

Matt starts to speak but stops.

They all wait for him to say something.

MATT

I was invited.

MR. OWEN

Matthew has as much right to be here as any of you.

Matt stares off.

MARTIN

You all know why I'm here. Four packs a day, I can't breathe, and I can't stop.

LISETTE

I don't really have a problem.

Lisette looks over at Mr. Owen.

LISETTE

I don't.

Mr. Owen nods at her.

LISETTE

All right.

She lowers her head and speaks softly.

LISETTE

Prescription drugs. For lower back ache. But then I couldn't stop. Everyday I say I won't but I do. My life is so good except for that.

She looks around at them suspiciously.

Their faces look at her with sympathy.

She takes a breath and relaxes into her chair and the group.

MR. OWEN

You're last, Matthew.

Matt sits with his head down.

DOUG

Oh, come on, man, how bad can it be? I mean in this group?

Doug laughs.

DOUG

Just say it.

MATT

Sex addict.

Irma gasps.

Matt looks at her sadly.

MARTIN

It could be worse.

MATT

For you maybe.

MR. OWEN

Fine. Now you are all on equal footing. No one stands above or below.

Mr. Owen walks the perimeter of the group.

EXT. HOLMES PARK - DAY

The group moves off together.

Lisette and Douglas amble along a path, not talking.

DOUG

So, you're a drug addict and I'm--

LISETTE

Hey, who said I was a drug addict? Did you hear me say that?

Doug looks at her and laughs.

DOUG

Oh, I'm sorry. Prescription drug addict.

He laughs again.

LISETTE

You're just a falling down drunk. I heard what Lewis said.

DOUG

He said I was a blast. What a rush.

LISETTE

What a recommendation, from an old dead man.

Doug stops and looks at her.

She sees a pink camellia and picks it.

DOUG

You know, Lisette, there's more here than what we see.

She smells the flower.

LISETTE

Like what?

DOUG

Things are happening on different levels, at the same time. Like LSD.

LISETTE

I never took LSD.

She holds out the camellia for him to smell.

He takes a deep whiff of it.

DOUG

I want to show you something.

He picks up his *silvercord* and runs it through his hands.
Then he stops and holds it.

DOUG

Here, touch it.

Lisette looks afraid, but she puts her forefinger on it.

VISION - DOUG AS A CHILD

Doug, 10, watches as his STEPMOTHER grabs his black cocker spaniel and gets in her car.

DOUG

Don't give him away. I'll take
care of him.

She starts the engine, as he runs over and bangs on the window.

She drives away.

BACK TO SCENE

Doug runs another section of his *silvercord* through his hands and stops.

DOUG

Now watch.

VISION - DOUG IN THE FUTURE

Doug, wearing a veterinarian's jacket, examines a German shepherd.

DOUG (O.S.)

This could be my future.

BACK TO SCENE

LISETTE

Don't go on.

DOUG

Why not?

She shakes her head.

LISETTE

Don't.

DOUG

You want to do it?

LISETTE

I don't know.

DOUG

Come on, Lisette, don't be such a baby.

LISETTE

I'm not a baby.

DOUG

Then don't act like one.

She looks at him and picks up her *silvercord*.

DOUG

Farther from you, that seems to be the past.

She runs it through her hands.

VISION - LISETTE AS A CHILD

Lisette, 3, excited, watches her MAMA, African-American, reach into a shopping bag.

LISETTE

Ooooh.

Her Mama gives her a Barbie doll.

Lisette holds Barbie, turns her around, upside down and looks under her clothes.

LISETTE

She's all white, Mama.

MAMA

Barbie, that's her name.

Lisette looks at her arm and puts Barbie's arms next to hers.

LISETTE

I don't like Barbie.

MAMA

Shush and play with your new doll.

Lisette makes a face.

LISETTE

Why, Mama?

MAMA

Because I say so.

LISETTE

I want a Barbie like me.

Mama shakes her head and exits.

BACK TO SCENE

LISETTE

(to Doug)

Here, touch it.

Doug touches her *silvercord*.

BACK TO VISION

Little Lisette finds a brown crayon and colors Barbie.

Mama enters, sees Lisette and slaps her.

MAMA

Shame. Shame.

Lisette cries.

BACK TO SCENE

DOUG

Poor little Lisette, huh?

Lisette nods.

DOUG
Go ahead. Touch another place.

She shakes her head.

LISETTE
I've seen enough for now.

EXT. THE PARK - DAY

Gabriel and Patti walk together, silent and not looking at each other.

In the distance, two peacocks strut.

PATTI
Look!

She points through the trees.

Two peacocks parade proudly.

Gabriel sees them.

PATTI
Did you ever see anything so beautiful?

GABRIEL
Yes.

PATTI
What?

GABRIEL
My mother.

Patti looks at him.

PATTI
Oh.

He looks at her.

PATTI

It must be wonderful to be
beautiful.

He looks off.

GABRIEL

It depends.

PATTI

On what?

GABRIEL

What you do with your beauty.

Patti looks puzzled.

PATTI

What did she do with it?

FLASHBACK - GABRIEL KILLS THE WHITE RABBIT

In the middle of a circle of VILLAGERS, GABRIEL, 8, watches AZNA, his mother, a beauty with black hair and passionate eyes, carry the white rabbit, squirming and squealing, to him.

She pushes the knife at him but he shakes his head. She pushes the knife again and brings the rabbit close to his face.

Gabriel looks the struggling rabbit in the eye and his tears come.

AZNA

Now!

Gabriel looks at her in terror and grabs the knife.

He stabs the rabbit again and again.

Finally one of the MEN pulls him away.

MAN

Enough.

Gabriel looks at Azna with glazed eyes.

He turns and walks away.

AZNA

Gabriel!

He keeps walking.

BACK TO SCENE

GABRIEL

Too much.

Gabriel and Patti walk.

PATTI

What should a person do with
beauty?

She looks at him.

GABRIEL

Let others enjoy it.

PATTI

You enjoy looking at Irma, don't you?

He looks surprised.

GABRIEL

I saw her when she arrived.

PATTI

So?

He shrugs.

EXT. THE PARK - DAY

Irma and Matt walk with Martin in the middle.

MATT

(to Martin)
What do you do out there?

MARTIN
Librarian. Reference librarian.

Irma looks at him.

IRMA
What a great job.

Matt looks at her to see if she's serious.

MARTIN
You think so?

Irma nods.

IRMA
They've always helped me.

Martin narrows his eyes.

MARTIN
I hope you asked serious
questions.

MATT
What's a serious question?

MARTIN
(imitates a patron)
Well it's not - "Who played *I
Dream of Jeannie?*"

Matt and Irma laugh.

MARTIN
You think that's funny?

Irma tries to stop laughing.

Matt keeps laughing.

MARTIN

You think I went to college,
earned a degree in library
science, returned for a masters in
technology research methods - so I
can answer an inane question
anyone can find on the internet?

Irma nods and nods.

Matt sees Martin is serious and stops laughing.

MARTIN

So I smoke and drink and drug
and...whatever my friends do.

MATT

Why don't you quit.

MARTIN

I wouldn't have any friends left.

MATT

I meant your job.

MARTIN

A good job like that? Only twelve
years to retirement.

Irma gives Matt a look

MARTIN

It's complicated.

They walk on.

MARTIN

(to Matt)
And you do what?

MATT

Electrician.

IRMA

So you do know about electricity?

MATT

All there is to know except what I don't.

MARTIN

I got a bad shock once. An amateur electrician fixed my light switch.

Matt shakes his head.

MATT

There are no amateurs - not with electricity.

IRMA

Electricity always scared me.

MARTIN

Me too. After that.

MATT

It scares lots of people. That's because they don't understand it.

She looks at him interested.

IRMA

What?

MATT

It's a force. And it will have its way. You have to respect it, that's all.

She looks away.

MARTIN

Sounds like some people.

Irma studies Matt.

They pass masses of marigolds.

IRMA

Smell the marigolds.

As she hurries over to them, her *silvercord* entangles with Matt's *silvercord*.

It's like an electric shock passes through them, and they stand statue-still. They look at each other, afraid.

MATT

I can't move.

IRMA

Me neither.

MATT

I don't feel...I can't move.

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - IRMA

Irma experiences Matt's memories.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

MATT, 10, sits up in bed.

On the wall hangs a picture of Jesus.

Matt masturbates and watches Jesus.

Matt comes.

Jesus smiles.

EXT. SORORITY HOUSE - NIGHT

MATT, 18, sits in a tree next to the house. He peers through binoculars into....

A LIGHTED ROOM

A FEMALE STUDENT walks around in bra and panties.

Matt masturbates.

INT. WOMEN'S CLOTHING STORE - DAY

MATT, 22, sits outside the dressing rooms as though he's waiting for someone.

He has a coat over his lap, and as he looks into the dressing rooms, he masturbates.

In a mirror he sees a naked woman.

He comes.

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - MATT

Matt experiences Irma's memories.

A huge mound of cakes, cookies, cupcakes, candy bars, M&Ms, Hershey's Kisses, Jujubees fills the world.

Something inside moves around, and a huge human arm emerges. Then another huge arm and a huge leg. Suddenly it is sucked back in.

Two huge human legs emerge from the mound and then two huge arms, and they are sucked in.

Irma's huge head pops out of the mound, and her whole huge body follows. She's out and running away, and the mound slides after her.

MOUND

Feeeeed, feeeeed, feeeeed.

She runs faster and faster, and the mound is right behind her. The mound makes a big leap and smothers her again.

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

Matt and Irma's *silvercords* are still connected.

Irma touches her genital area.

Martin looks shocked.

Irma realizes what she's doing and looks back in horror.

IRMA

(to Matt)

Move!

They try to move but nothing happens.

MATT
I'm too heavy to move.

She stares at him.

MARTIN
Look, when I say three, pull away
from each other.

Irma looks at Matt and they wait.

MARTIN
One . . . two . . . three!

They pull away and break the connection between their
silvercords.

They look at each other in shock.

IRMA
If that was your mind ... I
couldn't stop.

MATT
If that was you ...

She's afraid to ask.

IRMA
What was it like?

He avoids her eyes and shakes his head.

IRMA
Come on.

MATT
Lots of candy and voices.
(high-pitched) Feeeeed, feeeeed,
feeeeed.

She covers her ears.

MATT
They got you.

They stand and look at each other with dread.

INT. IRMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Irma, in casing, sits at the table and eats Salisbury steak, boiled potato and broccoli.

EXT. IRMA'S YARD - NIGHT

Irma slowly climbs the stairs, clutching onto the railing.

She reaches the top and is out of breath. She pauses and glances at the red peonies and cactus and catches her breath.

She climbs down.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

Everyone sits in the circle.

MR. OWEN

I would like you to go to your
houses where you will find
something you long ago discarded.
You may reclaim it now.

INT. PATTI'S HOUSE - DAY

Patti enters and sees a silver flute. She looks surprised but picks it up, wets her lips and plays a few notes. Then she tries a scale. She stops, smiles and replaces the flute to her lips. She plays "Simple Gifts".

INT. MARTIN'S HOUSE- DAY

Martin enters and spots a Royal Manual Typewriter on the table next to a stack of typing paper. He looks shocked and walks over to it to examine it.

He moves the carriage back and forth. Then he sits and inserts a piece of paper. He types.

INSERT - THE PAGE, which reads:

The quick brown fox jumped over
the lazy dog. 1234567890

MARTIN (O.S.)

How do they know these things?

BACK TO SCENE

Martin laughs and hits the carriage return.

EXT. GABRIEL'S BACKYARD - DAY

Gabriel exits the back door and steps into the yard.

A white rabbit hops around. Gabriel gasps and closes his eyes. A look of pain crosses his face.

The rabbit moves closer to him.

Gabriel opens his eyes and watches it. The rabbit hops up to him and stops. Gabriel stoops down, but the rabbit doesn't move. Gabriel looks the rabbit in the eyes and sees his own reflection.

Hesitantly, he reaches out to touch it. The rabbit lets him. Gabriel pets the rabbit, and the rabbit seems to smile. Gabriel smiles.

INT. DOUG'S HOUSE - DAY

Doug enters and sees a mahogany upright piano. "Schirmer's Piano Etudes" rests on the score holder. Doug looks amazed.

DOUG

How do they know?

He sits and plunks a few notes. Then he opens the book and looks at the first etude. He begins to play, hesitantly but ably. Soon he is lost in the sounds of the music.

INT. LISETTE'S HOUSE - DAY

Lisette enters and finds two African-American dolls, girl and boy. Complete wardrobes of colorful African clothes lie next to them. She picks the girl up and dresses her.

INT. IRMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Irma enters and finds a book, "Rumi's Poems of Love". She sits and opens it and reads aloud.

IRMA

"Do you love me or yourself more?
There is nothing left of me."

Irma stares off.

IRMA

They know.

INT. MATT'S HOUSE - DAY

Matt spots a mound of clay on the table. He approaches it slowly. He looks around, but no one is there.

He sits and stares at it. He removes a large piece and begins to roll it between his fingers and forms a fat tube. He stretches and molds four limbs from it and then a head. Finally he pulls up and molds a hump on the back. He stops and looks at the camel he's created.

He takes a deep breath and looks around.

MATT

How do they know these things?

EXT. HOLMES PARK - DAY

Irma sits in the sun near a pink camellia bush. She lifts her nose to the scent of the flowers. She is relaxed and spaced out.

DAYDREAM - IRMA THREATENED

A shadow gradually encroaches over her. She suddenly realizes she's sitting in blackness.

She turns around to see what is causing the shadow.

A huge man towers over her.

She screams and . . .

BACK TO PRESENT TIME

Matt stands over her.

MATT

What's the matter?

IRMA

What are you doing?

MATT

Nothing.

He steps back.

MATT

I was just gonna scare you.

He laughs.

Irma stands up.

IRMA

You did something. You did it.

She looks in horror at him.

Matt looks back in fear.

MATT

Honest to god, Irma, I didn't do anything.

She looks around and runs away.

Matt starts to run after her.

She screams at him.

IRMA

Leave me alone. Don't touch me.

MATT
I didn't touch you. I didn't do
anything.

Matt stops and watches her.

Irma runs faster and faster. She sees her house and runs
toward it.

Matt is waiting.

IRMA
How did you - oh.

Before he can answer, she opens the door, runs in and slams
it.

She sees her *casing* in the chair.

IRMA
What happened?

She stares at her *casing*.

IRMA
What happened to you? Tell me.

She waits for her *casing* to speak.

IRMA
Just tell me what happened.

Irma waits a few moments. Then she sits across from her
casing.

IRMA
You knew. All these years you
knew.

The *casing* sits immobile.

IRMA
What he did. You never told me.

A KNOCK at her door.

Irma sits immobile.

Another KNOCK.

MATT (O.S.)

Irma. I'm sorry if I did something wrong.

Irma hears him and closes her eyes.

MATT (O.S.)

I shouldn't've come up like that. I'm really sorry, Irma.

A BANG against the door.

Irma shakes her head. Tears fall.

MATT (O.S.)

I hope you feel better.

Irma rises and moves to her *casing*.

IRMA

You kept it, and kept it and kept it.

She stares at the huge *casing*.

IRMA

And this happened.

She indicates the huge *casing*.

IRMA

You should've told me. Maybe I could've helped.

She looks down.

IRMA

But maybe not.

Irma strokes the *casing's* shoulders, arms, back and head.

She puts her arms around her *casing* and holds it.

IRMA

Now we both know.

She lays her head on her *casing's* shoulder.

INT. IRMA'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Irma, in *casing*, looks at herself in the mirror.

With a small eyebrow brush, she brushes her dark, straight brows upward and makes her face open, candid. Then she brushes them downward and assumes a depressed look. Her entire face changes to hangdog, and she studies herself. Then she brushes them up and smiles.

INT. IRMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Irma, in *casing*, reads the framed message hanging on the wall.

INSERT - THE FRAMED MESSAGE, which reads:

We live not for ourselves
but for some purpose
some special end
to be accomplished by
oneself and not another,
something which will
be left undone
if we do it not
or not be done
as it would have been
if the one ordained to it
had done it.

Anon.

BACK TO SCENE

Irma, disturbed, touches the message.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

Everyone sits in the circle.

MR. OWEN

Have you all read the framed words
in your houses?

Irma, Martin and Gabriel nod.

MR. OWEN

A gift awaits which will help you.
Go now and find it. When you see
it, call a Spirit Worker.

DOUG

That's it?

PATTI

Is it big or small?

MATT

Will anyone else see it?

IRMA

Why do you want us to do this?

Mr. Owen, with Tibetan features, looks around.

MR. OWEN

Is everyone ready?

Mr. Owen smiles and walks away.

EXT. HOLMES PARK - A FIELD - DAY

Doug walks through tall grasses. He looks around and sees
trees, a rabbit running away, steps that lead up to
nothing.

He spots a large boulder, as tall as he is, and as he
approaches it, two eyes on it seem to open. Douglas stares
at the eyes and they stare back. He tests the boulder and
tries to push it, but it doesn't move. He slams his whole
body against it, but no movement.

He smiles, steps back and calls.

DOUG

Okaaay!

A Spirit Worker in blue appears. She walks to the boulder.

SPIRIT WORKER

This boulder of great strength and power will now become a part of you. It will guide and help you. Do you accept it?

Doug looks surprised.

DOUG

Okay. Yes, I do accept it.

He suddenly seems to stand taller and bigger.

DOUG

I do.

EXT. HOLMES PARK - A ROAD - DAY -CONTINUOUS

Patti walks along and searches. She sees a baby koala bear in a tree and stops and smiles. She shakes her head and keeps walking.

She comes to a small outdoor shrine with candles and a statue of the laughing Buddah but continues walking.

Out of the corner of her eye, she notices movement and turns her head. A single white peacock struts through the grass. She stares at it with longing.

PATTI

(whispers)

I found it.

A Spirit Worker in lavender appears.

SPIRIT WORKER

It is beautiful. It will now become a part of you and shine within. Do you accept?

Patti looks at the peacock and nods. A glow begins to emanate from her and her face softens.

PATTI

Oh. Oh.

EXT. HOLMES PARK - A POND - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Irma approaches the water and wades into it. Colored fishes swim between her legs. They tickle her and she laughs.

Suddenly SAMBA MUSIC plays and a large, red fish emerges from the water. It stands on top of the water and begins to dance the samba.

Irma stares. She quickly looks around and calls.

IRMA

Come, come.

A Spirit worker in yellow appears.

SPIRIT WORKER

You have found it.

They watch the fish dance.

SPIRIT WORKER

The dance will now become a part of you, Irma. You are as free as this fish to move to the music wherever you hear it. Do you accept?

IRMA

Just like that?

Irma looks back at the fish.

SPIRIT WORKER

Yes.

IRMA

Sure. Yes.

Irma begins to move with the fish to the music.

EXT. HOLMES PARK - FIELD OF FLOWERS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Lisette walks through a field of sunflowers. She stops to smell them. She plucks one and puts it her hair. She walks on, plucks another one and places it on her chest. She walks again, stops, and plucks flower after flower and places them all over her body. She places the last one on her forehead.

LISETTE

I'm ready.

A Spirit Guide in gold appears.

SPIRIT WORKER

The sunflowers become a part of you and shine golden light. You will now live according to your own light and not another's. Do you accept?

Lisette looks afraid.

LISETTE

What about my Mama?

SPIRIT WORKER

She has her own light.

LISETTE

Is it okay for me to do this.

The Spirit Worker nods.

Lisette makes a deep sigh and picks another sunflower. She holds it in front of her.

LISETTE

I accept.

She begins to softly shine.

EXT. HOLMES PARK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Martin sits on stairs that go nowhere. He looks bored and shakes his head.

MARTIN

I wonder what I'm ...

Crows fly overhead and CAW-CAW, CAW-CAW-CAW, CAAAAAWWW.

He looks up and the sound enlivens his face. He looks excited.

Martin calls.

MARTIN

You better come.

A spirit worker in pink appears.

SPIRIT WORKER

These crows will become a part of you, Martin, enabling you to speak out for what you want and don't want. They are fearless and so are you. Do you accept them?

Martin looks up and smiles at the CAWING.

MARTIN

Definitely.

EXT. HOLMES PARK - A FIELD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Matt hikes along, pushing grasses, bushes and flowers out of his way. He looks up, down and around.

MATT

I guess not.

Just then he spies a butterfly emerging from the chrysalis. He's about to push it away, but he stops and watches the fragile but persistent struggle to get out.

MATT

I wonder if this is what he meant?

He continues to watch and now sees more of the butterfly, its wings and color, green-blue.

MATT

Yo!

A Spirit Guide in green appears.

SPIRIT WORKER

You found it.

MATT

I guess. But I don't understand.

SPIRIT WORKER

You don't have to, Matt.

The butterfly seems stuck, and Matt reaches out to help it.

The Spirit Guide stops his hand.

SPIRIT WORKER

You will hurt it if you try to help. Allow it to emerge in its own time.

Matt nods and watches it.

SPIRIT WORKER

Will you allow this creature with all its fragility, delicacy and beauty within you?

He looks at the Spirit Guide like it's crazy.

MATT

Why would I want to do that?

The Spirit Worker smiles at him.

The butterfly is almost out.

Matt gets a wistful look on his face.

The butterfly emerges, shakes its wings and flies into the air. It hovers in front of Matt's eyes.

Matt stands and looks at it.

MATT

I'll think about it.

The butterfly leaves. Regret spreads across Matt's face.

EXT. HOLMES PARK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gabriel stands under a pomegranate tree. He looks up and tries to see the sky. He pulls off a pomegranate. He looks at it and bites into it. Red juice runs down his chin. He bites again and more and more juice comes out of the fruit until it covers his whole body.

A Spirit Worker stands off to the side and watches.

SPIRIT WORKER

You are cleansed.

Gabriel rubs his heart.

EXT. HOLMES PARK - NIGHT

The group and Mr. Owen sit on benches in a circle around a fire.

All the faces reflect the flames and shadows of the night. They look tense and eager with anticipation.

Mr. Owen, his face with ASIAN FEATURES, looks around at them.

MR. OWEN

You are each experiencing what you came here to learn. For your courage, I salute you.

He makes a tiny bow with his head.

MR. OWEN

It is time you reveal yourselves in your *casings*. I am sorry for the pain this will cause some of you, but it can not be avoided.

He glances at Irma and Patti.

MR. OWEN

I want you to remember - without facing your conflicts, growth is not possible. With it - infinite possibilities.

DOUG

I hope so. We oughta get something out of this - even if it's not infinite.

IRMA

When will we --

MATT

Show ourselves. What's the big deal? I mean how bad can it be?

PATTI

Bad.

Irma gives Patti a questioning look.

Matt shakes his head.

MATT

Women! If it's not perfect, it's bad.

PATTI

Whose fault is that?

MATT

What? Mine?

Irma looks back and forth between them. She doesn't get it.

GABRIEL

Men expect women to be perfect - like the ones in movies.

MATT

They should look like that.

Gabriel looks incredulous. He glances at Irma.

Irma looks back and forth between Matt and Gabriel.

LISETTE

It's important to look good. It's our responsibility.

MARTIN

Well I can't wait to see you, Honey.

Lisette blows him off.

LISETTE

Psshhh.

GABRIEL

And women expect women to be perfect.

He looks at Lisette.

MR. OWEN

Since perfection is an illusion, I am sure a perfect woman does not exist.

DOUG

I hope not. She'd be a real drag, wouldn't she.

MR. OWEN

It is time now to enter your *casings*. Go to your houses and return.

INT. IRMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Irma enters.

She walks over to her *casing*.

It is dressed in a different black flowing blouse and black polyester pants. It wears makeup and the hair is in a neat ponytail.

IRMA

They want to see you.

She stares at her *casing*.

IRMA

I'm so sorry for you.

Her *casing* sits placidly.

IRMA

If I didn't know them, I wouldn't
care.

Her *casing* sits peacefully.

IRMA

The humiliation.

Irma paces around the room.

A KNOCK on the door.

Irma freezes.

MR. OWEN

It is Mr. Owen, Irma.

Irma opens the door.

Mr. Owen looks at her stricken face.

MR. OWEN

I thought you might need some
support.

Mr. Owen enters.

Irma indicates her *casing*.

IRMA

That's not me. None of them knows
that person.

MR. OWEN

Without conflict there is no growth. Remember?

Irma shakes her head.

IRMA

I don't care about that.

MR. OWEN

It is why you came here. Nothing changes unless you change it.

IRMA

I can't stand how they'll look at me. You heard what they said about women. I can see their faces now.

She turns away.

MR. OWEN

Irma, how they see you is through their own lenses - blue, pink, green, critical, afraid, kind even.

Irma shakes her head and closes her eyes.

MR. OWEN

Some will see only the body, and others will still see your spirit.

Irma looks out the window.

IRMA

This is a wonderful place - if only ...

MR. OWEN

It is time. Come.

Irma looks at him, pleading not to go.

Mr. Owen extends his arm toward her *casing*.

Irma gives him one final look. She stands in front of her *casing* for a moment; then she enters.

Irma moves her *casing*. She holds onto the chair's arms and prepares to rise.

She rises.

Mr. Owen nods.

EXT. HOLMES PARK - NIGHT

Mr. Owen and Irma walk down the path to the cathedral.

They arrive at the door.

Mr. Owen opens the door and motions her to enter.

She indicates he should enter first.

Mr. Owen enters and waits for her.

Irma stands outside for a moment.

She enters.

INT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

Everyone is present; they stand or sit; all are in their *casings*.

Doug wears old faded jeans, a blue work shirt and sandals. His long hair is in a ponytail. He is very thin and worn-looking.

Patti no longer has red hair but is a blonde. Her face is tightened and slightly distorted from too much cosmetic surgery. She is normal weight and wears a dress. She's had breast augmentation.

Martin looks unhealthy with dry, wrinkled skin. His hair is thinning. He wears brown slacks and a blazer.

Lisette has straight hair with lots of extensions. She is slender and wears an expensive, hip outfit and \$1000 Manolo Blahnik shoes. Her necklace and earrings are gold.

Gabriel looks very similar to his spirit, but hollow and jaded.

Matt has a short crewcut and doesn't look friendly but guarded and predatory.

They all turn as Irma enters.

Patti stands completely still and stares.

Matt's eyes grow large as he looks at Irma in horror.

Gabriel simply watches her and nods as she walks to the circle.

Lisette looks her up and down and down and up as though she can't believe what she's seeing.

Martin looks at her with compassion.

Doug makes a WHISTLE sound like WOW!

Lewis PLAYS a little tune on his harmonica.

MR. OWEN

Thank you all for coming.

He looks around at all of them.

MR. OWEN

Please sit.

They all sit.

Irma carefully lowers herself into a chair.

Everyone still stares at her.

She looks down. Then she lifts her head and looks around the circle.

They all lower their eyes except Matt who can't stop staring at her.

And Gabriel who nods and smiles at her.

MR. OWEN

Well. Here we are.

The group's eyes leave Irma and go to him.

MR. OWEN

Again I salute you.

His head makes a tiny bow, and when it raises, his features are HISPANIC.

Matt's and Lisette's eyes go back to Irma.

MR. OWEN

Because you have been free of your casings for a while, that allowed you fresh perspective. Perhaps insight.

DOUG

Into what?

MR. OWEN

Your spirit's true quest.

Doug looks confused.

PATTI

What should we look for?

MR. OWEN

Where you have placed your energy?
Or not placed it.

IRMA

You sound like we make our energy
go where we want.

Matt taps his foot.

MR. OWEN

You do. With your thoughts. And
where your thoughts go, so goes
your energy.

MATT

That's hard to believe. Most of the time I don't have control over my thoughts.

MR. OWEN

In time, with practice, you could.

MARTIN

How long are we going to stay in *casing*? After spirit, it's hard. Very hard.

MR. OWEN

You have new understanding.

Mr. Owen looks at them.

MR. OWEN

Will you each describe the first thing you noticed after reentering tonight?

No one says anything.

Patti squirms in her chair and touches her face.

PATTI

All right. I felt my skin tightening. I've had so much surgery, it almost hurts.

She touches her face and breasts.

Martin watches Patti.

MARTIN

It was hard to breathe. The place I breathe from seems very shallow now.

DOUG

Like I'm half asleep, hard to move my body around with me.

Inadvertently he glances at Irma.

She looks away.

LISETTE

My clothes and shoes and jewelery
felt heavy. My hair weighed on
me.

She laughs self-consciously and twirls one of her hair
extensions.

LISETTE

Even my makeup.

She shakes her head.

Mr. Owen looks at Irma.

IRMA

Guess.

MR. OWEN

You can say a little more, Irma.
There is space here for you.

Irma looks at him, breathes and sits up.

IRMA

I'm used to myself. It wasn't so
much about entering my body. But
that you'd all see. You'd see how
I really am.

She pauses and looks at Gabriel.

IRMA

But who am I really? Body or
spirit?

MR. OWEN

Both. And the *casing* reflects the
thoughts you have. You create
yourselves with your thoughts.

IRMA

And what was done to me. I didn't
remember. Until...

She looks at Matt.

IRMA

...I remembered

She looks surprised at what she said.

GABRIEL

(to Irma)

I carry my weight deep inside.
Where you can't see it.

MATT

I felt free in spirit. In my body
I feel a pressure. A constant
tension to get some.

He looks at Irma's body.

MATT

You know, some men don't mind it
like that.

Irma makes a face and sticks out her tongue and gags.

Mr. Owen notices.

MR. OWEN

(to Matt)

The experiences you describe are
your challenges in this lifetime.

DOUG

What if I don't want any
challenges?

MR. OWEN

You wouldn't have incarnated.

DOUG

Just like that, huh? An answer
for everything.

Lewis PLAYS a little tune.

Doug gives him a dirty look.

Mr. Owen looks kindly at Doug and laughs.

Then he stands and walks around the perimeter of the circle.

MR. OWEN

In each of your houses hangs a message. Read it and ask yourself: why am I here? What have I come to do?

Irma looks at him. She lifts her shoulders and shakes her head.

Mr. Owen moves to leave.

LISETTE

Mr. Owen, my sapphire ring is missing. It was my mother's.

Mr. Owen looks at Lisette. Then he looks around the group.

MR. OWEN

The ring must be returned. You can not take what, by right of consciousness, belongs to someone else.

He looks at Gabriel.

Gabriel shakes his head.

Mr. Owen looks at all of them.

MR. OWEN

You have much work to do.

Mr. Owen exits.

Matt looks at Gabriel.

MATT

I'd check his house.

GABRIEL
(to Lisette)
I didn't steal it.

He looks around.

GABRIEL
Not here. I wouldn't.

PATTI
(to Matt)
You're a troublemaker.

MATT
I just tell it like it is, Babe.

MARTIN
You heard Mr. Owen. The ring
needs to be returned.

The group sits and looks at each other.

EXT. IRMA'S YARD - NIGHT

Irma climbs the stairs at a moderate pace. She doesn't clutch the railing but lightly touches it.

At the top she smells the red peonies.

She climbs down.

She climbs three more times.

EXT. HOLMES PARK - DAY

Irma, in *casing*, walks by herself down a cobblestone path.

She reaches an open space in a clump of silver birch trees where two peacocks strut.

She watches them move around.

A white peacock joins the other two.

IRMA

(to peacocks)

You're so lucky. All people do is
admire you. No one looks away
when they see you.

GABRIEL (O.S.)

Someone might. If the sight of
beauty hurt.

Irma spins around.

Gabriel stands next to a silver birch tree.

GABRIEL

Look at this tree. Is it
beautiful?

Irma looks at it and nods.

GABRIEL

It's like you, Irma.

She freezes at his compliment.

IRMA

Are you flirting? With me?

He laughs.

GABRIEL

You're both tall and graceful.

IRMA

You say that after ... after ...

She indicates her body.

GABRIEL

I saw you when you arrived, Irma.
I was sitting up in a tree.

Irma gasps.

IRMA

And you acted so ... nice, anyway.

He shrugs.

GABRIEL

When you leave, you must take
beautiful and hopeful thoughts
with you.

He touches her arm.

GABRIEL

And get on with your life.

Irma moves away.

IRMA

You can say that. Look at you.

GABRIEL

It's not on the surface, Irma.

IRMA

I wish mine wasn't.

GABRIEL

Nothing is mine.

He laughs.

GABRIEL

My mother took it all away by her
'right of consciousness'. Every
thing I was or wasn't.

Irma touches his arm.

IRMA

My body was taken from me. My
father.

He looks at her hand.

GABRIEL

So, since nothing belonged to me,
I took whatever I wanted.

IRMA

Maybe one day you'll be able to
give it back.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Patti, Irma and Lisette, in spirit, walk together.

Mr. Owen appears out of the trees and joins them in their
walk.

MR. OWEN

It would be beneficial for all of
you to experience each others'
casings.

IRMA

I don't know. Why would anyone --

MR. OWEN

Just trust, Irma.

She looks at him, worried.

Mr. Owen walks away.

PATTI

He probably knows best. None of
us seems to.

LISETTE

I'm in.

Irma looks more worried.

IRMA

Okay. I mean there's no more
secrets, are there?

INT. IRMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Irma, Lisette and Patti, in spirits, sit relaxed on the
chairs and couch. Their *casings* sit next to them.

PATTI

(to Irma)

Do you have any brothers or sisters?

IRMA

My mother didn't think it was a good idea.

Patti looks at her, questioning.

Irma shrugs and looks away.

LISETTE

Are we ready?

PATTI

Sure.

IRMA

Why not.

PATTI

All right, Irma?

IRMA

Yes.

Irma watches fascinated as Patti enters her *casing*.

Patti, in Irma's *casing*, struggles to rise from the chair and finally stands.

PATTI

Ooooooh. I'm pooped.

She carefully moves to the mirror and looks at herself.

PATTI

I can't believe this.

She touches Irma's face and touches the cheeks, forehead, chin and nose.

PATTI

It's so smooth.

She walks back to the chair and sits.

IRMA

Lisette?

Lisette nods.

Irma enters Lisette's *casing*.

She strokes the beautiful suit.

IRMA

Oh, it's lovely.

LISETTE

My friends call me Fashion Nose.

Patti looks at her.

LISETTE

I sniff out the new fashions.

Irma walks around in the high heels.

IRMA

How do you walk in these?

LISETTE

Years of practice.

Patti exits Irma's *casing*.

Reluctantly Lisette enters. She moves around.

LISETTE

Whew, this is hard work, Girl.

She tries to lift one of Irma's legs.

IRMA

You can walk, but don't try that.
Four hundred pounds on one foot.

Lisette nods and slowly moves Irma's huge body around the room.

LISETTE

Oh, Irma, I'm sorry.

Irma looks surprised.

IRMA

For what?

LISETTE

For being such a superficial ...
bitch.

Irma looks even more surprised.

LISETTE

If this is what it's like for you
... never mind. Just thanks for
letting me ... you know. Okay?

Irma nods.

INT. IRMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mr. Owen and Irma in spirit look at each other.

IRMA

This is so hard. I hate going
back in.

Mr. Owen indicates her *casing*.

MR. OWEN

Please enter.

IRMA

I don't have to.

MR. OWEN

Just for a moment.

IRMA

Is it a trick to get me in?

Mr. Owen stares at her and shakes his head.

Irma looks down.

IRMA

I'm sorry.

MR. OWEN

Now go in. Just for a moment.

Irma enters her body.

MR. OWEN

Stand up.

Irma stands.

MR. OWEN

Move around.

Irma moves around the room.

IRMA

I feel a little different. What
is it?

MR. OWEN

You are fifty pounds lighter.

Irma touches her body. She pulls at her blouse.

IRMA

It's hard to tell.

MR. OWEN

You have begun. It's all right to
release the weight, Irma. You
needed it to protect you from his
hands, but his hands are gone and
so is the fear of them.

Irma shakes her head.

IRMA

But what happens when I leave
here? Who's going to prepare my
food? Who's going to help me?

Mr. Owen nods.

MR. OWEN

Even more important than the food,
Irma, is the change in your mind,
your being.

IRMA

What change?

MR. OWEN

How are you different from when
you arrived?

Irma thinks.

IRMA

I don't know. But I found out
what happened to me. Why I...I
had to create all this.

She indicates all the fat.

Mr. Owen nods.

MR. OWEN

Yes, and ...

IRMA

Well, I told them the truth about
myself. And they liked me anyway.
They really do.

She looks at him.

IRMA

And maybe, maybe, I don't feel so
afraid.

MR. OWEN

Yes, Irma. And before you leave,
you may realize what you were
ordained to do.

She looks at him with hope.

INT. IRMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Irma, in *casing*, stands in black pants and a new black blouse with white stars and half-moons around the neck. She touches the stars and moons and smiles.

She brushes her hair. She prepares to tie it in a ponytail, but changes her mind and lets it hang free.

She brushes her strong, dark eyebrows upward with an eyebrow brush.

She moves to her suitcase and removes a tube of lip gloss. She applies it to her lips, and they shine pale pink.

She looks at herself in the mirror, tilts her head and grins.

She reaches her left hand over her right shoulder and pats herself on the back.

IRMA

Atta girl. Atta girl.

EXT. HOLMES PARK - DAY

Irma walks through the park. It is the first time she has walked through the park in *casing* since her arrival.

She hears the crows above her CAW-CAW, CAW-CAW, CAW-CAW. She looks up and watches three of them chase each other across the sky. She caws back at them.

IRMA

CAW-CAW. CAW-CAW

Suddenly Matt, in body, steps out from the trees.

Irma turns, startled.

IRMA

Oh, I didn't see you.

MATT

Maybe I didn't want you to see me.

IRMA

Why not?

He gives her a big smile.

MATT

I saw you leave your house.

IRMA

So?

MATT

So you didn't see me, did you?

Irma watches him carefully.

MATT

You know, Irma, as an electrician
I could light up a city with my
knowledge and skill.

Irma looks puzzled.

MATT

You, on the other hand, could
light up a city with all this fat
energy you've stored up.

IRMA

What're you talking about, Matt?

MATT

I've been watching you.

Irma looks surprised.

IRMA

Are you spying on me?

Matt laughs.

MATT

Would you like that?

Irma gets scared and walks away.

Matt talks to her back.

MATT

I liked you coming on to me the other day.

Irma turns and looks incredulous.

IRMA

Are you crazy?

MATT

Crazy about you.

Matt runs up grabs Irma's arm.

She tries to pull away.

IRMA

Matt, stop it.

She struggles but he's a big guy and much stronger than she.

He pushes her down on the ground.

She tries to raise herself but she can't.

He falls on top of her.

MATT

When I come in you, I'll think about that curley-haired fox inside you.

Irma, terrified, struggles to get out from under his large body.

MATT

Yo, when's the last time you got some? Hahahaha.

Irma pushes at him with her hands.

MATT

I never had one like you. You should be honored, Irma.

Irma shouts at him.

IRMA

You can't take what isn't yours by
right of consciousness. Mr. Owen
said so.

Matt stops for a moment and looks at her.

IRMA

This isn't yours. It's mine.

Matt rubs against her body.

IRMA

My body!

MATT

Shut up!

Irma seems to gather more courage.

IRMA

Not this time!

Matt rubs harder.

He tries to pull Irma's pants down.

IRMA

Matt! Don't do this.

MATT

Shut up! I can't concentrate.

IRMA

You're raping me! Concentrate on
that!

Matt rips Irma's pants.

Irma struggles furiously.

MATT

Nobody else would want you.

IRMA

As fat as I am, I don't want you.
Get off!

MATT

Well get ready, cause you're gonna
get me.

Matt unzips his pants.

Irma looks around and starts shouting.

IRMA

Help me! Help me!

Matt puts his hand over her mouth.

He rolls side to side all over her body.

MATT

Acres and acres of it!

Irma realizes he's not going to stop. She stops
struggling, looks up and focuses.

MATT

Good girl.

He prepares to enter her.

From Irma's forehead her spirit emerges.

Irma, in spirit, stands on the ground.

Matt looks up dumbfounded.

MATT

Hey, what're you doin'? Get back
in here.

IRMA

Get off me.

MATT

You're not supposed to do that.
Get in here.

Irma stares at him like he's crazy.

Matt looks back at her and taunts.

MATT

You know what, I'm gonna do it
anyway.

Irma's *casing* looks up at him, eyes wide open, unwavering,
accusing.

Matt looks at the *casing*; his eyes show fear.

MATT

(to *casing*)
Stop looking at me like that!

The *casing* stares back.

MATT

Close your eyes.

Matt roughly closes the eyes.

The *casing* looks peacefully asleep.

Matt frowns. He starts rubbing himself to get hard again.

IRMA

You'll never get it up, you loser.

MATT

If you shut up!

Matt rubs and masturbates himself furiously.

Irma gets close to his face.

IRMA

What's the matter? Won't it get
hard.

MATT

(to himself)
Come on. Come on.

Irma looks at him sadly, and just then he looks up.

IRMA

You're not supposed to do this.
You're supposed to help me.

Finally Matt realizes he can't get hard.

MATT

You spoiled it. You would have
liked it.

Irma looks at him like she could vomit.

Matt rises, pulls up his pants and GROWLS at Irma.

He walks away.

Irma sits and strokes her *casing's* face.

IRMA

It's all right. We're all right now.

She looks around to make sure Matt is really gone.

She enters her *casing*.

Irma opens her eyes. She looks around.

She prepares to raise herself. She rolls on her side and
pushes herself up with her arms and hands.

She stands. She pulls up her pants and holds them
together. She shakes out her blouse and arranges it over
her pants. She brushes the dirt and grass from her
clothes.

She shakes her hair out and pats it down. She brushes her
eyebrows up with her pinkie.

She stands up straight and walks away with dignity.

EXT. IRMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Irma approaches her house.

Mr. Owen sits on the porch steps. He looks concerned as he
watches her walk up.

She sees him and knows he knows.

MR. OWEN

How are you, Irma?

She looks away and doesn't say anything. Then she looks at him.

IRMA

I think I'm okay.

MR. OWEN

Are you?

IRMA

I took care of myself. I stood up.

Mr. Owen nods.

IRMA

For the first time, Mr. Owen.

MR. OWEN

He left Holmes.

IRMA

Good.

She looks at his compassionate face.

IRMA

I'm not like you, I don't forgive him.

MR. OWEN

I understand, Irma.

IRMA

But you think ...

MR. OWEN

I think you acted very bravely

Irma makes a small half-smile.

MR. OWEN

And that's enough for today.

Tears come to Irma's eyes.

INT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

Mr. Owen and the group sit in a circle. One chair is empty.

Lewis hangs out beyond the circle.

MR. OWEN

This shall be our final meeting at
Holmes.

He looks around at them.

MR. OWEN

I think you have all received help
for what brought you here.

LISETTE

Excuse me, but is Matt okay? I
didn't like him very much, but I
don't like a lot of people.

MR. OWEN

Matthew has chosen to postpone his
healing.

Irma maintains a stony face.

MR. OWEN

Nothing like this has ever
happened at Holmes.

He looks at Irma.

MR. OWEN

You will have to decide whether to
take action in the outside world.

IRMA

I don't think so. For me it's
finished.

Mr. Owen nods.

MR. OWEN

We regret he did not remain. We offer help to all who seek it. Even those who commit heinous acts.

LISETTE

Oh, then, there's still uh help, yeah?

DOUG

After what he did to Irma, who gives a rat's --

LISETTE

At least he stopped, hunh?

Doug looks at her like she's crazy.

LISETTE

Ooops.

MR. OWEN

(to Lisette)

Redemption. That is what you mean. And the worse someone behaves, the more they need healing.

GABRIEL

He helped us.

Patti looks at him like he's crazy.

GABRIEL

I'm serious. Because of how he treated some of us.

Patti looks at Irma.

PATTI

I'm just glad Irma is okay.

GABRIEL

(to Irma)
You're a strong woman.

Irma looks at him.

IRMA

That was the worst thing that
could've ever happened to me...

She looks at Mr. Owen.

IRMA

And I survived. Actually I
overcame.

MARTIN

Prevailed. You prevailed.

Mr. Owen looks at Gabriel.

MR. OWEN

How did he help you, Gabriel?

GABRIEL

All right - the way he treated me.
Like a thief.

He looks at Lisette.

GABRIEL

I found your ring, Lisette. In my
suitcase under my clothes. I
never did lock doors.

He reaches in his pocket and removes the ring.

LISETTE

My ring!

Gabriel hands it to her.

Lisette places the sapphire ring on her middle finger, then
holds out her hand to look at it.

INSERT - THE RING

It is a large ring and seems to weigh her hand down.

BACK TO SCENE

GABRIEL

I guess Matt wanted to brand me a
thief forever so Irma...well...

He looks at Irma.

LISETTE

I never thought you took it. Poor
Matt.

IRMA

Neither did I.

Gabriel nods at them.

MR. OWEN

Lewis, come here.

Lewis moves to the center of the circle.

MR. OWEN

It is time for you to go to the
other side.

LEWIS

Hey, man, I ain't goin' nowhere.
I likes it here.

Mr. Owen shakes his head.

MR. OWEN

Your time as a discarnate spirit
has come to an end. Your stay at
Holmes has prepared you to move
on.

LEWIS

What about my main man over there?

Lewis nods to Doug and plays a Blues tune.

DOUG

There's no room at this inn,
Lewis. It's closed.

LEWIS

Damn!

DOUG

You were a blast too.

Lewis laughs.

MR. OWEN

On the other side, Lewis,
harmonica music is more beautiful
than any you have ever heard.

Lewis looks at him in disbelief.

LEWIS

You just sayin' that, man.

MR. OWEN

I have heard it.

Lewis squints at Mr. Owen and plays an old spiritual.

LEWIS

Okay, Man, you the boss.

A shimmering bridge appears.

Mr. Owen walks Lewis over to it.

Lewis steps onto the bridge and waves.

The group waves to Lewis as he crosses over.

Mr. Owen takes his seat again.

MR. OWEN

(to Doug)

He can always return, you know.

Doug frowns.

MR. OWEN

To see if you have reopened for
business.

Mr. Owen winks at him.

Martin points after Lewis.

MARTIN

That's where I'm going. I'm not
staying in here.

He indicates his body.

MARTIN

I'm sick from smoking, and I don't
think I can stop. Too old.

Doug gives him a skeptical look.

DOUG

What, fifty? You're afraid, just
like the rest of us. Come on,
Martin.

Martin gives him a dirty look.

PATTI

You've already stopped for a
month.

MR. OWEN

Your final task is a visit. Your
casings have remained alone except
for your daily ministrations, and
now you will engage with them.

LISETTE

How?

MR. OWEN

Speak to them, touch. Thank them.

INT. MARTIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Martin watches his casing.

IMAGINING - MARTIN SPACES OUT

Martin holds a large knife and tries to cut his *silvercord*.

BACK TO SCENE

Martin watches his *casing* and finally pats his head.

INT. PATTI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Patti stretches and smooths out her *casing's* face. She kisses it on the cheek.

INT. GABRIEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Gabriel reads poetry to his *casing*. He smiles.

INT. LISETTE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lisette removes the extensions from her *casing's* hair. Then she sits in her lap, cheek to cheek.

INT. IRMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Irma strokes, hugs and kisses her *casing*.

INT. DOUG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

DOUG

I promise you. No more drinking.

Doug shakes hands with his *casing*.

EXT. HOLMES PARK - DAY

Irma, in spirit, stands beneath a huge old oak tree. She looks up. She disappears.

She appears high up sitting on a branch. She looks around.

IRMA

CAW-CAW. CAW-CAW. CAAAAAWWW.

EXT. IRMA'S HI-RISE BUILDING - DAY

Irma approaches and looks up to her floor.

INT. BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Building Manager stands behind the counter. He waves at Irma.

BUILDING MANAGER
Just coming back, huh?

IRMA
I'm home.

BUILDING MANAGER
I've got your mail here.

He reaches for it.

IRMA
Not yet.

She places her suitcase on the counter.

IRMA
Hold this for me while I...never
mind.

She leaves the suitcase with him.

Irma walks to the stairway and enters it.

The Building Manager looks after her with curiosity.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Irma walks up the stairs

INT. 15th FLOOR - DAY

Irma reaches the top step. She breathes heavily and smiles.

INT. HOYNE'S REALTY - DAY

Irma, noticeably thinner in a colorful blouse and purple slacks, enters and nods to the Receptionist. She sits at a front desk and begins to work.

INT. HOMELESS SHELTER - NIGHT

Doug, heavier and healthier, stands behind pans of fried chicken, potatoes and green beans.

He serves the line of homeless people who pass in front of him.

At the end of the line is Mr. Owen.

EXT. NEW YORK MARATHON - DAY

Patti, wearing number 9770, runs in the marathon.

People line the route and cheer the runners. Among them is Mr. Owen, waving.

Patti's face is relaxed and normal looking; her freckles sparkle; her red hair shines in the sun. She waves to the onlookers.

INT. BAKERY - DAY

Irma enters and looks around.

SALESLADY

Hi, haven't seen you in awhile.

IRMA

I've been away.

Irma checks out the pastries.

INSERT - PASTRY CASE

Pans of Napoleons, eclairs, jelly rolls, chocolate doughnuts, bismarks, long johns and chocolate cupcakes fill the case.

BACK TO SCENE

Irma studies them.

IRMA

I'll have a chocolate cupcake.

The Saleslady places it in a large box.

Mr. Owen stops in front of the window and looks in. He smiles.

SALESLADY

What else?

IRMA

That's all.

The Saleslady stares at her.

IRMA

How much?

SALESLADY

Sure. Oh, uh uh \$2.79.

She removes the cupcake from the large box and places it in a small white bag.

Irma tries to hide her pride.

INT. HOSPITAL WORKSHOP ROOM - NIGHT

Martin leads a Smokers Anonymous group. At his side is an oxygen tank which leads to a breathing apparatus in his nose. He looks happy.

In the back row, Mr. Owen sits and nods.

INT. FASHION DESIGN ROOM - DAY

Lisette, her hair in an Afro, sits at a large table with bolts of colorful fabric. She designs a man's casual shirt of African colors.

Mr. Owen passes by the open door and peeks in.

EXT. "IRMA REALTY" - DAY

Irma, thinner, wearing a tailored black suit, stands outside a brick building.

She watches a WORKMAN hang a sign for her new business.

INSERT - THE SIGN, which reads:

"IRMA REALTY - Your Dream Is My Dream"

BACK TO SCENE

Irma crosses her arms in front of her in a hug.

Mr. Owen walks down the street and smiles at the sign.

EXT. LINCOLN PARK - NIGHT

Matt sits on a park bench.

A PROSTITUTE walks past and slows down.

In the distance, Mr. Owen raises his hand and imperceptibly shakes his index finger.

Matt shakes his head at her.

The Prostitute moves on.

EXT. JACKSON SQUARE, NEW ORLEANS - DAY

ARTISTS work at their easels and paint portraits of the tourists seated before them.

TAROT READERS sit at scattered tables with candles and crystals, their decks ready. No one sits at their tables.

Gabriel, wearing a white shirt and white shorts, sits at a small table with a deck of Rider Tarot Cards laid out in a Celtic Cross spread. A plaque reading "Gabriel Montezuma" rests on the table. A young GIRL sits and listens to him give her a reading.

A line of six PEOPLE waits for a reading with Gabriel.

Irma, 200 pounds, with curley dark hair, wearing a pink sundress, steps to the end of the line.

EXT. THE PARK INSIDE JACKSON SQUARE - DAY

A fence encloses the little Park with its trees, bushes and benches.

Mr. Owen walks through the Park.

He stops and watches Gabriel through the fence as Gabriel reads the cards.

EXT. JACKSON SQUARE - DAY

Irma finally reaches the front of the line and approaches the table.

Gabriel looks up, shocked.

Irma sits.

Gabriel smiles and extends his hand.

As they shake hands, Irma notices he wears the sapphire ring.

GABRIEL

Lisette gave it to me before I
left. Mine by right of
consciousness, she said.

She points to the cards.

IRMA

I came to have my cards read.

He nods and begins to shuffle.

Irma cuts the cards and looks at him.

He lays out the cards in a Celtic cross and studies it. He looks up at her.

GABRIEL

Let's see here.

The ring fits his hand just fine and the sapphire sparkles in the sun.

FADE OUT.

Vita

Karen Atherton was born in Chicago, Illinois. She received her B.A. from the University of New Orleans in Music Composition. Her M.F.A. is in Creative Writing, Screenwriting. She is grateful to all her teachers who have taught her so much.