

TO REACH HER FULL POTENTIAL

an audio drama script

Written by

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within

Working Draft

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Casting Notes

Announcer: Someone warm and authoritative with a good radio voice. The hosts of old-time suspense and horror radio, say Ernest Chappell or Arch Oboler, would be good models.

Receptionist: Female, middle-aged, professional.

Nurse: Also female, perhaps a bit younger and warmer in self-presentation than the Receptionist.

Briony Carrara: (pronounced BRY-uh-nee kuh-RAH-ruh) College girl, but mature for her age, which is 18 to 19 over the course of this story. Speaks in standard middle-American English, perhaps just a little on the high-strung side except when she's in a hypnotic trance, when her voice falls to a calm contralto.

Dr. Gneiss. Pronounced "guh-NICE" or better "g'NICE." Middle-aged woman and motherly in her tone, with a trace of a Viennese accent.

The Pharmacist: Can be any gender or ethnic background. Speech is fairly crisp and professional.

Grandmother Carrara: Cranky woman about 80, old-worldish and perhaps with an Italian or other non-native English accent.

Voice of Leopardi: Pronounced "leh-oh-PAR-dee" The ideal performer for this role would be a male actor who is a native Italian speaker. Giacomo Leopardi is one of the greatest of all Italian poets, so it would be good to do justice to the one bit of him quoted in Italian.

Woman Classmate. Voice performance should suggest a young woman (perhaps about 19) who's cute and bubbly.

Miss Zerkalova. Pronounced "zyr-kuh-LOH-va." A woman not much older than Briony, she normally speaks in a Russian or at least Slavic accent, except when she's imitating Briony, in which case she sounds rather like Briony to someone who isn't listening carefully and doesn't know Briony well.

The Marquis. Use the U.S. pronunciation "mar-KEE" rather than the British "MAR-kwis" because of the U.S. setting. Middle-aged, immensely refined and well-spoken, with a distinct but not thick and also perhaps hard-to-place European accent.

1 INT. RADIO STUDIO - DAY
(Announcer)

OPENING THEME MUSIC

Radio studio with optimal acoustics. An ANNOUNCER introduces the drama.

(1)

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and Gentlemen and those who might be beyond such categories, welcome. Wherever and whenever you might be listening, Rational Public Radio is proud to bring you a new entry in the series Thaumatoophile Dreams. In this program, "To Reach Her Highest Potential," an attractive woman college student seeks professional help for dealing with a routine problem, and ends up achieving something she would never otherwise have imagined. We join our story as that college student, Miss Briony Carrera, sits in a waiting room for an appointment with psychiatrist Dr. Gneiss.

2 INT. RECEPTION AREA DR. GNEISS'S OFFICE - DAY
(Receptionist, Nurse)

The waiting room of a psychiatric practice, where BRIONY CARRARA is waiting for her appointment. The acoustics of this office are soft and quiet due to carpet, plush seating, and so on. LIGHT BAROQUE MUSIC plays softly in the background. The quiet is broken only by the TRILLING of an office telephone, which is answered after one ring by the RECEPTIONIST.

(2)

RECEPTIONIST

(in background)

Dr. Gneiss's office.

(pause to hear other
end of conversation)

Yes, she's available this coming
Wednesday. Can I get your
information?

The Receptionist's conversation is interrupted by the sound of a DOOR QUIETLY OPENING (the door between the waiting room and the hallway leading to the rooms where DR. GNEISS practices).

(3) NURSE
Ms. Carrara? Dr. Gneiss will see you
now.

Pause as Briony gets up to walk across the reception area,
the sound of DOOR QUIETLY CLOSING.

3 INT. HALLWAY AT DR. GNEISS'S OFFICE - DAY
(Briony, Nurse, Dr. Gneiss)

At the sound of the door closing, the background LIGHT
BAROQUE MUSIC ceases.

(4) BRIONY
I have to say, this is some office.

(5) NURSE
What do you mean, Ms. Carrara?

(6) BRIONY
Every other doctor's office I've ever
been in is so institutional and
neutral. But this one has all these
paintings on the walls, fancy
furniture, sculptures in niches...

(7) NURSE
Dr. Gneiss believes that being around
beautiful things helps her patients,
Ms. Carrara.
(brief pause)
Here we are.

Sound of the Nurse KNOCKING GENTLY on the door to Dr.
Gneiss's consulting room.

(8) DR. GNEISS
(from within)
Come in!

Sound of DOOR OPENING.

(9) NURSE
Dr. Gneiss, it's your two o'clock.

(10) DR. GNEISS
Please show her in and close the
door.

Sound of DOOR CLOSING.

4 INT. DR. GNEISS'S OFFICE - DAY
(Briony, Dr. Gneiss)

(11) DR. GNEISS
I'm Dr. Gneiss. You must be Ms.
Carrara.

(12) BRIONY
I am, but please call me Briony.

(13) DR. GNEISS
(with a smile in her
voice)
Briony. An herbal name. It suits a
young lady like you. Won't you sit
down on the couch there?

(14) BRIONY
Thank you, doctor.

(15) DR. GNEISS
So Briony, tell me a bit about
yourself.

(16) BRIONY
I'm a first-year student at Gnosis
College, about to start my second
semester.

(17) DR. GNEISS
Um hm. And what are studying?

(18) BRIONY
I'm thinking of focusing on either
art history or philosophy. They both
really fascinate me.

(19) DR. GNEISS
Well Gnosis will give you a very good
education in either. My only advice
to you would be not to rush in to one
thing. Take your time to appreciate
many different subjects. Are things
going well at college?

(20) BRIONY
I made Dean's List last semester.

(21) DR. GNEISS
Oh, congratulations!

Faint POP of a fountain pen being uncapped.

(22) DR. GNEISS (cont'd)
So Briony, what brings you to see me?

Note: whenever Briony speaks below there are faint SCRATCHING SOUNDS, these being Dr. Gneiss taking notes with a fountain pen.

(23) BRIONY
Dr. Gneiss, I think I have what are called "body-image issues."

(24) DR. GNEISS
Tell me more.

(25) BRIONY
I often feel like I look just hideous. I can't stand to look at myself in the mirror. And when people look at my, I keep thinking that they're internally mocking or pitying me.

(26) DR. GNEISS
And are they?

(27) BRIONY
No! Everyone at college is actually really kind to me. But I just can't shake these feelings.

(28) DR. GNEISS
And I bet you have friends who are always telling you there's nothing wrong with the way you look.

(29) BRIONY
Yes.

(30) DR. GNEISS
Indeed probably many of them even tell you that you're beautiful.

(31) BRIONY
Yes.

(32) DR. GNEISS
And does that help you with how feel?

(33) BRIONY
No. It only makes me wonder what is wrong with me.

- (34) DR. GNEISS
And are your feelings interfering with you life in any way? I mean, aside from just feeling bad?
- (35) BRIONY
It gets to the point where I don't feel like going out. I don't like going to parties. I feel awkward around most people. I wear the most shapeless clothes I can. I often try to sit in the back of classes so no one will see me. It's like I'm really missing out on college.
- (36) DR. GNEISS
Yes, I understand.
- (37) BRIONY
I remember when I had to take a swim test.
- (38) DR. GNEISS
A swim test?
- (39) BRIONY
At Gnosis at the start of your first semester you have to take a swim test. You have to jump in the pool and swim a single lap. If you can't do that, you have to take a swimming class during your first semester.
- (40) DR. GNEISS
I see.
- (41) BRIONY
Weird requirement for a college degree, I know. They're aping the Ivy League who are all aping Harvard, one of whose alumni drowned when the Titanic went down -- like knowing how to swim would have helped him. Anyway, I remember that when I went to do mine I wore the heaviest, most covering, ugliest swimsuit I could find. I so much didn't want anyone to see me. And even then, the thought of coming out of the locker room made me sick to my stomach.
- (42) DR. GNEISS
Do you have trouble swimming?

- (43) BRIONY
No! I was an all-state swimmer when I was in high school. Or at least I was early in high school, before I started getting a little...big up top, which wasn't good for me as an athlete and also might have been the start of my...issues. I so much didn't want anyone to see me! Only the horrible thought of having to be in that pool twice a week for a semester got me out of the locker room.
- (44) DR. GNEISS
At least you did get out.
- (45) BRIONY
And after I was done I went back to my room and huddled under the covers on my bed for an hour, crying.
- (46) DR. GNEISS
Oh, dear. I'm so sorry to hear that. Tell me, have you had any issues with eating?
- (47) BRIONY
Such as?
- (48) DR. GNEISS
Such as not being able to eat, or binging and purging, anything like that?
- (49) BRIONY
No, doctor. I even checked on my diet with the college nutritionist, and she said I was excellent eating habits.
- (50) DR. GNEISS
Well, that's certainly good to hear. Do you take any drugs, legal or illegal?
- (51) BRIONY
Uh...
- (52) DR. GNEISS
Remember that everything said here is strictly confidential.

- (53) BRIONY
No. Nothing, except for Tylenol from time to time for a headache.
- (54) DR. GNEISS
And do you drink any alcohol?
- (55) BRIONY
No, and as you know, I don't go to many parties.
- (56) DR. GNEISS
Okay, that's all good. Have you tried any other forms of therapy before, for your problems with body-image or anything else.
- (57) BRIONY
Well, yes. I tried cognitive-behavioral therapy but it didn't seem to help.
- (58) DR. GNEISS
Interesting. Usually body-image issues like you describe when unaccompanied by eating disorders respond well to cognitive-behavioral therapy. Perhaps we need to try a different approach.
- (59) BRIONY
I so hope you can help me, doctor.
- (60) DR. GNEISS
I think I might be able to. But I need to do a little preparation first. What I'd like you to do is make an appointment for this time next week. In the meantime I'm going to write you a script for a little something...
- (61) BRIONY
I don't know how much I like the idea of any drugs, doctor.

Sound of PEN SCRATCHING ON PAD followed by the TEARING of a single leaf off the pad.

(62) DR. GNEISS
This is very mild, really more of an herbal preparation than a drug. All it should do is help take the edge off your anxiety.

(63) BRIONY
All right, doctor. This time next week.

Sound of DOOR BEING OPENED

(64) DR. GNEISS
Oh, and Briony, one more thing.

(65) BRIONY
Yes, doctor?

(66) DR. GNEISS
When you come next week, be sure to wear the same sort of comfortable, loose clothing you're wearing today. It will be good for your therapy.

5 INT. PHARMACY - DAY
(Pharmacist, Briony)

Some mild background noise appropriate to such an establishment. 1980s light rock plays in the background.

(67) PHARMACIST
Next, please.

(68) BRIONY
Hi. I have a prescription that I'd like filled.

Slight CRINKLE OF PAPER as Briony hands the script over.

(69) PHARMACIST
Hm. "Lithotozine." I've never heard of this before.

(70) BRIONY
Are you sure you're reading it right?

(71) PHARMACIST
Let me just look this up.

Sound of TYPING ON A COMPUTER KEYBOARD

(72) PHARMACIST (cont'd)
Huh. What do you know? It does exist.

(73) BRIONY
So you can fill my prescription?

(74) PHARMACIST
Well, we don't have it in stock...

Sound of more TYPING.

(75) PHARMACIST (cont'd)
...and none of our other stores within thirty miles have it either. I could, however, put in an order with the manufacturer to overnight it here, and you could pick it up tomorrow afternoon. Would that work for you?

(76) BRIONY
Yes. It would. Thank you so much.

6 INT. HALLWAY AT DR. GNEISS'S OFFICE - DAY
(Briony, Dr. Gneiss)

Shift back to the quiet background of the offices. GENTLE KNOCKING on Dr. Gneiss's office door.

Sound of DOOR OPENING.

(77) DR. GNEISS
Come in, Briony.

Sound of DOOR CLOSING.

7 INT. DR. GNEISS'S OFFICE - DAY
(Briony, Dr. Gneiss)

(78) BRIONY
Thank you, Dr. Gneiss.

(79) DR. GNEISS
Here, let me take you coat and scarf. You're heavily dressed.

(80) BRIONY
It's awful out there, Dr. Gneiss. Gray and cold and sleeting.

- (81) DR. GNEISS
Typical midwestern January. I'll hang those up for you. In the meantime, please sit down
- Sound of CABINET OPENING and then a CABINET CLOSING and then a SQUEAK of a chair as Dr. Gneiss sits down.
- (82) DR. GNEISS (cont'd)
So have you been taking the medicine I prescribed for you?
- (83) BRIONY
Yes. Strange things. Little gelcaps that are sparkling golden inside. I think they might actually be helping with my anxiety a little.
- (84) DR. GNEISS
Good, good.
- Sound of a FOLDER BEING OPENED by Dr. Gneiss.
- (85) DR. GNEISS (cont'd)
So I've been thinking about your case, Briony, and I think that we might want to try a hypnotism session.
- (86) BRIONY
Hypnotism? That sounds...sort of weird.
- (87) DR. GNEISS
(chuckles slightly)
Oh I know it seems strange in this day and age. But hypnotism is nothing like what you see in the movies. It's just an induced somnambulistic state. It isn't mind control. It can't make you do anything you don't want to do. What it can do is create a mental permission structure to do things you do want to do, but are blocked from doing.
- (88) BRIONY
Well...

(89) DR. GNEISS
It's also very safe. Physicians and therapists have been using it for almost two centuries and no one has been hurt yet.

Brief pause while Briony thinks it over.

(90) BRIONY
All right, I'll give it a try.

(91) DR. GNEISS
Excellent! You just sit there, and I'll come over to you.

SQUEAK of chair wheels as Dr. Gneiss moves her chair over to Briony.

(92) DR. GNEISS (cont'd)
(slow, almost droning)
Now, what I would like you to do is just relax itty-bitty muscles on your face and forehead around you eyes. Relax them as much as you can. As you do so you should find that your eyelids are becoming heavy, so heavy that you cannot imaging opening them. That's right. Now relax you body, deeply, deeply, good. I'm going to show you how relaxed you are. I'm going to gently lift your right hand by the thumb -- don't help me, just leave your arm relaxed and let me do all the work. And now lifting, and dropping it back...

There is a VERY SOFT THUD as Briony's arm falls back.

(93) DR. GNEISS (cont'd)
 (continued almost
 sleep-inducing voice)
 ...so how relaxed that is. And now I
 am going to raise my hand up past our
 eyes. Will your heavy, heavy eyelids
 to open and follow it. Good. And
 now I am going to drop my hand past
 your eyes. As I do, let your eyelids
 drop closed as they relax. Feel the
 wave of relaxation traveling down you
 body. Imagine yourself becoming twice
 as relaxed as it does. Now I'm going
 to raise my hand again and we'll
 repeat the cycle...and again...and
 again...and again.
 (pause)
 Now you should be in a fully
 somnambulistic state. Open your eyes
 and look to your left. You should
 see a little screened-off area in the
 corner of my office. Do you see it?

Note: while in her trance Briony's voice is deeper and more relaxed than her "normal" tone of speaking. Briony's lines under this condition will be note with the parenthetical "in trance."

(94) BRIONY
 (in trance)
 Yes.

(95) DR. GNEISS
 Good. Now, I'd like you to walk over
 to that corner and pull the screen so
 that I cannot see you and you cannot
 see me. Can you do that?

(96) BRIONY
 (in trance)
 Yes.

SOFT FOOTSTEPS as Briony walks over and then a SLIGHT
 SCRAPING NOISE as she moves the screen.

(97) DR. GNEISS
 Good. Now, you should see what
 appears to be a full-length mirror on
 the wall. Do you see it?

(98) BRIONY
 (in trance)
 Yes.

- (99) DR. GNEISS
When you look into it, what do you see?
- (100) BRIONY
(in trance)
I see a young woman.
- (101) DR. GNEISS
Very good, Briony. When you look at the young woman, I want you not to think that your looking at yourself. Instead, you are looking at another young woman behindd the glass. Can you do that for me?
- (102) BRIONY
(in trance)
Yes.
- (103) DR. GNEISS
Excellent. Now, I want you to imagine that you are willing the woman in the glass taking off her sweatshirt and letting it fall to the floor at her feet. Ready?

Slight RUSTLE OF CLOTHING as Briony takes off her sweatshirt and lets it fall hat her feat.

- (104) BRIONY
(in trance)
She is doing it.
- (105) DR. GNEISS
Good, and now what do you see?
- (106) BRIONY
(in trance)
She is standing and facing me in her t-shirt.
- (107) DR. GNEISS
Can you will her to take off of the t-shirt?

Another SLIGHT RUSTLE OF CLOTHING.

- (108) BRIONY
(in trance)
She is doing it. Now she is facing me in her bra.

(109) DR. GNEISS
Let's see if the young woman behind
the glass will go just a little
further. Can you will her to take
off her brassiere?

(110) BRIONY
(in trance)
I shall try.
(brief pause)
She is doing it.

SOFT PLOP as the bra hits the floor.

(111) DR. GNEISS
You must be able to see her bare
breasts now. Tell me what they are
like.

(112) BRIONY
(in trance)
They are large and firm and well-
formed. I think you might call them
voluptuous.

(113) DR. GNEISS
Try willing her to lift them up and
squeeze them together.

(114) BRIONY
(in trance)
She must have very nice cleavage.

(115) DR. GNEISS
Now will her to drop them, all of a
sudden.

(116) BRIONY
(voice slightly less
trancelike)
They bounce and jiggle!

(117) DR. GNEISS
Okay, I think that is enough for one
session. Will the woman in the glass
to dress herself back up.

SLIGHTLY MORE PROLONGED RUSTLE OF CLOTHES as Briony dresses
back up.

(118) DR. GNEISS (cont'd)
 Now come back here and sit down
 facing me.
 (pause)
 Good. Now, when I snap my fingers I
 want you to come out of your
 somnambulistic state. You will not
 remember what happened, but I want
 you to keep, deep in your mind, your
 memory of how beautiful the young
 woman behind the glass was. Ready?

SOUND OF DR. GNEISS'S FINGERS SNAPPING

(119) BRIONY
 Oh! I feel like I was just asleep?
 Did something happen?

(120) DR. GNEISS
 Something good I think, Briony. This
 is only the first session and you
 will probably need several more. But
 I think you're on the road to a
 better place.

TRANSITIONAL MUSIC INDICATING PASSAGE OF SEVERAL WEEKS

8 INT. DR. GNEISS'S OFFICE - DAY
 (Briony, Dr. Gneiss)

Sound of DOOR CLOSING.

(121) DR. GNEISS
 Well good afternoon. Briony. I see
 you've dressed up for this
 appointment!

(122) BRIONY
 Well, I just...felt a like I'd try on
 this pencil skirt and blouse today,
 seeing as the forsythia are bloom and
 the snow is finally melting. I
 feel...comfortable in it

(123) DR. GNEISS
 Well then, perhaps your therapy is
 working, yes?

(124) BRIONY
 (giggles a little)
 Yes, perhaps.

- (125) DR. GNEISS
So, are you still taking your
medicine?
- (126) BRIONY
I am. I can't say what it is doing
for me, but somehow the ritual of
taking it twice a day is comforting
in itself.
- (127) DR. GNEISS
Excellent. I shall make sure that
your prescription is refilled. In
the meantime, before we begin this
week's hypnosis session, is there
anything you would like to talk
about?
- (128) BRIONY
Well, actually yes.
- (129) DR. GNEISS
Please, make yourself comfortable on
the couch and tell me.
- Note: when Briony speaks below, more PEN SCRATCHING sound
effects.
- (130) BRIONY
I couldn't sleep at all one night.
- (131) DR. GNEISS
Can you tell me why?
- (132) BRIONY
I think it happened because of
something in my art-history survey
class.
- (133) DR. GNEISS
Did someone do something to upset
you?
- (134) BRIONY
No, but there was something about a
work of art we studied.
- (135) DR. GNEISS
Tell me more.
- (136) BRIONY
Do you Gian Lorenzo Bernini's Apollo
and Daphne?

- (137) DR. GNEISS
Yes. It's very famous. I remember making a point of going to see it in the Galleria Borghese the first time I visited Rome.
- (138) BRIONY
It's so striking, as if Bernini could capture a dramatic moment in stone the way a camera captures a fast-moving scene as a single still image. And the work is so fine, right down to little leaves sculpted of marble in the branches extended from Daphne's fingertips as she transforms into a laurel tree.
- (139) DR. GNEISS
And how did that deprive you of sleep?
- (140) BRIONY
I felt so...exhilarated thinking about it. My heart was beating fast, for hours. And the thought of transformation made me feel incredibly turned-on.
- (141) DR. GNEISS
Did you masturbate?
- (142) BRIONY
What?
- (143) DR. GNEISS
Did you masturbate? Did you try to pleasure yourself in response to the fantasy of transformation?
- (144) BRIONY
You don't think that's sick or wrong?
- The PEN-SCRATCHING of Dr. Gneiss's note-taking stops.

(145) DR. GNEISS
 Briony, as a professional therapist I hear a lot of sexual fantasies from my clients, many of which are far more peculiar than yours, some of which indeed might make you outraged...or sick to your stomach. But for them, that's what works. There is no harm in taking pleasure in your fantasies, doing so hurts no one. And I want you to take it from me: life is too short, and too filled with suffering, that we can afford to throw away pleasure when it happens to come our way. My advice to you is that if this happens again, you should pleasure yourself and then just relax and go to sleep. You won't be sorry about it at all.

Short pause as Briony takes this in.

(146) BRIONY
 Okay, I'll try that.

(147) DR. GNEISS
 Good. Now, are we ready for another session of hypnosis?

(148) BRIONY
 Yes. I'm ready.

TRANSITIONAL MUSIC INDICATING PASSAGE OF SEVERAL WEEKS

9 INT. HALLWAY AT DR. GNEISS'S OFFICE - DAY
 (Dr. Gneiss)

KNOCKING at the door Dr. Gneiss's office.

(149) DR. GNEISS
 (from within)
 Come in!

Sound of DOOR OPENING.

10 INT. DR. GNEISS'S OFFICE - DAY
 (Briony, Dr. Gneiss)

(150) DR. GNEISS
 Shorts and a halter top, Briony?
 That is a change.

- (151) BRIONY
It's very hot outside, Dr. Gneiss.
- (152) DR. GNEISS
It certainly is. Why not sit down on the couch and cool down?
- (153) BRIONY
I have something to show you. It's in my handbag.
- SHUFFLING as Briony pulls something out of the handbag.
- (154) DR. GNEISS
Well, this is about the tiniest bikini I've ever seen -- a little thong for the bottom and two tiny triangle of fabric at the top. I suppose it would cover what social convention requires women to cover, albeit only barely. Why bring it to me?
- (155) BRIONY
I wore this recently, Dr. Gneiss.
- (156) DR. GNEISS
You wore it. In public?
- (157) BRIONY
At a recent family reunion. At Lake Montoosuc.
- (158) DR. GNEISS
(obviously fascinated
by this development)
Tell me more.
- (159) BRIONY
I put it on in the little changing hut they have for swimmers. And then I shimmied and jiggled in it right down the beach in front of the assembled Carrara clan.
- (160) DR. GNEISS
Really! And how did that make you feel?

(161) BRIONY
 I could feel the eyes on me of everything male in sight from ages eight to eighty. And those of a few of the women too, I suspect. And how did it make make me feel? I felt magnificent! I felt like I was glowing. I felt like was the goddess at the center of the world.

(162) DR. GNEISS
 Well, I suppose perhaps your body-image issues are a thing of the past.

(163) BRIONY
 And afterwards I got a furious lecture from my grandmother.

MUSIC STING TO INTRODUCE FLASHBACK

11 FLASHBACK -- GRANDMOTHER CARRARA
 (Grandmother Carrara)

(164) GRANDMOTHER CARRARA
 Do you think your beauty is something to exploit, you shameless little hussy? What decent man will have a girl you, who parades herself around like that? Mark my words, that beauty of your will fade far faster than you know. Your boobs will droop, your skin will wrinkle, and what jiggles will be fat in all sorts of place you don't want it to be!

TRANSITIONAL MUSIC

12 BACK TO SCENE

(165) BRIONY
 I don't care about any of that old-world crap about whether any man will "have me," but it was a real downer having to think about aging, especially in immediate aftermath of that glowing experience. It sure makes that lyric written by The Who - - "I hope I die before I get old" -- stand out with real force.

(166) DR. GNEISS
You don't think that line is just an
expression of adolescent rebellion?

(167) BRIONY
Are you familiar with Giacomo
Leopardi, Dr. Gneiss?

(168) DR. GNEISS
A central figure in European
literature, of course.

(169) BRIONY
I learned about him only last
semester. One of his aphorisms keeps
running through my head.

ITALIANATE MUSIC INDICATING A TRANSITION TO AN IMAGINED
SCENE

13 INTERPOLATED IMAGINE SCENE -- LEOPARDI SPEAKING
(Voice of Leopardi)

(170) VOICE OF LEOPARDI
La morte non è male: perché libera
l'uomo da tutti i mali, e insieme coi
beni gli toglie i desiderii. La
vecchiezza è male sommo: perché priva
l'uomo di tutti i piaceri,
lasciandogliene gli appetiti; e porta
seco tutti i dolori. Nondimeno gli
uomini temono la morte, e desiderano
la vecchiezza.

TRANSITIONAL MUSIC

14 BACK TO SCENE

(171) BRIONY
"Death is not an evil, because she
frees us from all evils, and together
with blessings she takes away the
desire for them. Old age is the
highest evil, because it takes away
all pleasures, leaving in place the
desire for them, and bringing along
with all sorts of suffering. All the
same, people fear death and desire
old age."

- (172) DR. GNEISS
You really feel that way?
- (173) BRIONY
Most of the time, yes. It's a real downer. I seem to have gotten rid of my body-image issues for a far worse obsession.
- (174) DR. GNEISS
Briony, we all age. It is the way that nature has marked out for us.
- (175) BRIONY
Nature? What do any of us owe to nature? Remember what John Stuart Mill wrote about it? "Killing, the most criminal act recognized by human laws, Nature does once to every being that lives; and, in a large proportion of cases, after protracted tortures such as only the greatest monsters whom we read of ever purposely inflicted on their living fellow creatures."
- (176) DR. GNEISS
(dryly)
I see you have been excelling in your studies of philosophy as well as literature.
- (177) BRIONY
I know it sounds stupid and immature, but it feels outrageous that I should have to grow old.
- (178) DR. GNEISS
There is no answer to that, save that we are powerless against the forces of time. There is hope in therapy of finding meaning to cope with suffering.
- (179) BRIONY
(a little bitterly)
"Meaning" -- a cheap synthetic substitute for happiness.
(changing tone slightly)
Is there no alternative?

Dr. Gneiss is silent for a few seconds before responding.

- (180) DR. GNEISS
Are you still taking the medication I prescribed for you when we first met?
- (181) BRIONY
Yes.
- (182) DR. GNEISS
Regularly? As instructed?
- (183) BRIONY
Yes.
- (184) DR. GNEISS
Then there is an alternative. It is Daphne's way.
- (185) BRIONY
I don't understand.
- (186) DR. GNEISS
The Lithotozine, the medication you have been taking contains as one of its components a mineralizing catalyst. The quantity is too small to be detected by conventional assay techniques, but as you have now been taking the medication for over a year a critical mass should be now have built up in every cell of your body. For that matter, it should be built up in your non-living tissues as well, such as you hair and nails. The catalyst can be activated by the right concentration of your own erotic energies. Like Daphne you could have your own transformation.
- (187) BRIONY
You had me take this medicine knowing that it would have this...effect?

(188) DR. GNEISS
 I sensed from the very beginning that you were longing for some sort of transformation. So I decided to make it possible for you to have a choice, something that takes long preparation. Most young women never get this choice, but you will. You can of course always decline the transformation. Walk out the door right now and never see me again. Throw the Lithotozine away and never take any more: it will wash out of your tissues entirely in a few months. But somehow, I suspect you won't do that.

(189) BRIONY
 I...I really have no idea what to say.

MORE DRAMATIC TRANSITIONAL MUSIC INDICATING PASSAGE TO ANOTHER SESSION

15 INT. DR. GNEISS'S OFFICE - DAY
 (Briony, Dr. Gneiss)

(190) BRIONY
 When you first suggested it, what you call my "transformation" seemed like the most obscene thing imaginable.

(191) DR. GNEISS
 But your view changed?

(192) BRIONY
 As I lie in bed at night I think about it and the prospect seems so exciting. To shrug off a life that's going to be mostly suffering -- as all human lives are, I have been convinced of that by Schopenhauer -- and become a source of joy for hundreds of generations.

(193) DR. GNEISS
 Do you take my advice on what to do when you feel like this?

(194) BRIONY
This fantasy -- if that is what it is -- has turned me into a truly accomplished masturbater, if that is what you mean.

(195) DR. GNEISS
And you are still taking your medicine?

(196) BRIONY
Yes. Even on the day you first made your obscene suggestion.

There is a pause in the dialog.

(197) BRIONY (cont'd)
I would want an assurance that I would not just be somehow disposed of after my transformation.

(198) DR. GNEISS
I can make certain arrangements.

INSTRUMENTAL TRANSITION MUSIC -- IF POSSIBLE A PUBLIC DOMAIN INSTRUMENTAL VERSION OF ISOLDES LIEBESTOD.

16 INT. COLLEGE CAFE - NIGHT
(Briony, Woman Classmate)

The background noise here is the HUM of activity as students talk, come and go, sound of espresso machines working.

(199) WOMAN CLASSMATE
So, what did you think of the movie, Briony?

(200) BRIONY
Well, I rather liked it.

(201) WOMAN CLASSMATE
Ew. I always found David Cronenberg's movies so icky.

(202) BRIONY
I admire the way he is so forthright about his interest in radical transformation.

- (203) WOMAN CLASSMATE
 Uh, okay. Want to come to the party at Silliman? They do great drinks and I can there will be a bunch of guys there who will be positively drooling over you. And they'll have a lot of steam to blow off now that the term is ending...
- (204) BRIONY
 Can I catch up with you? I'm expecting an important call.
- (205) WOMAN CLASSMATE
 At this hour?
- CHIRPING of a mobile phone.
- (206) WOMAN CLASSMATE (cont'd)
 Oops, I guess I'm wrong. Catch you later, incubator.
- (207) BRIONY
 Sure.
- SCRATCH of chair as the Woman Classmate gets up to leave.
 BEEP as Briony answers her mobile.
- (208) BRIONY (cont'd)
 Hello?
- (209) DR. GNEISS
 (on phone)
 Briony? It's Dr. Gneiss. I've made some arrangements on your behalf.
- (210) BRIONY
 I'm listening.
- (211) DR. GNEISS
 (on phone)
 You know how Professor Petrov at Gnosis College leads archaeological expeditions in Varvaria, especially the dig at the lost city of Thaumopolis, where he has found so many unusual Hellenistic artifacts?

- (212) BRIONY
Sure. Slots for students are few and in high demand. It's considered quite an honor to be chosen to join one of the excavation teams.
- (213) DR. GNEISS
(on phone)
Well congratulations, Briony. Your application to join the expedition has been accepted.
- (214) BRIONY
But I never appl...oh, I see.
- (215) DR. GNEISS
(on phone)
Because of your exceptional record, you're being allowed to join the expedition already in progress. So here is what you need to do. You leave three weeks from today. You're supposed to book a flight to Varvarograd and make your way from the airport to the Hotel Dzerzhinsky. Make arrangements to leave. Book your flight, get your shots, pack your bags. They are supposed to meet you at the airport. On the day you are supposed to depart, bring everything with you that you would be taking on such an expedition -- luggage, money, passport, all of it -- to my office. Come dressed for travel. You're making one last visit to your therapist to make sure you're in tip-top mental health for the rigors of a six-month archaeological dig. I'll explain the rest of the arrangement to you then.
- (216) BRIONY
Okay.
- (217) DR. GNEISS
(on phone)
In the meantime, be a normal college student. Go to parties, take your exams and do as best you can on them, whatever you do.

- (218) BRIONY
I guess I can begin by going to a party and being drooled over.
- (219) DR. GNEISS
(on phone)
Sorry?
- (220) BRIONY
Just a normal college student thing.
- (221) DR. GNEISS
(on phone)
I shall have to take your word for it. In the meantime, one last thing?
- (222) BRIONY
Sure, Dr. Gneiss.
- (223) DR. GNEISS
Keep taking your medicine. It will help.

TRANSITIONAL MUSIC SUITABLE FOR PASSAGE OF THREE WEEKS' TIME.

- 17 INT. DR. GNEISS'S OFFICE - DAY
(Briony, Dr. Gneiss, Miss Zerkalova, The Marquis)

THUD-THUD sound of Briony putting two heavy bags on the floor.

- (224) BRIONY
Oof! Those were heavy.
- (225) DR. GNEISS
At least you will not have to carry them any further.
- (226) BRIONY
And so now, the "arrangement?"
- (227) DR. GNEISS
Of course. Miss Zerkalova, would you come in please.

There is the SOUND OF A DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING (Note: slightly different from the door that Briony normally uses.)

- (228) BRIONY
(gasps)
She looks so much like me!

- (229) MISS ZERKALOVA
That is the idea, darling.
- (230) DR. GNEISS
Why don't you drop your robe and show
Briony just how much you look like
her.
- Soft PLOP of a robe falling to the floor.
- (231) BRIONY
She...certainly does look like me.
So what now?
- (232) MISS ZERKALOVA
Your clothes. Give them to me.
- (233) BRIONY
Seriously?
- (234) DR. GNEISS
Yes, all of them, Briony.
- (235) BRIONY
Uh, okay.
- (236) DR. GNEISS
Miss Zerkalova is an actress and a
model. She has arrived in America on
a false passport, but not to mind.
She will be leaving on yours.
Traveling as you, on your plane
ticket, with your luggage, wearing
your clothes. When she lands she will
enter the country on your visa. And
then she will make a terrible
mistake. Although young women
especially are warned not to take
unlicensed taxis from the airport in
Varvarova to their hotels, she will
be seen being persuaded by a handsome
young driver to take his. She will
get in that taxi, it will drive off,
and then she will disappear, which is
not difficult, as she can just go
back to her own identity. As for
you, how sad! The local police will
conduct inquiries and come up with
nothing, because of course there will
be nothing to find. There will be
speculation that you were trafficked
as a sex slave or murdered by a local
serial killer.

- (237) BRIONY
And we do all this because...?
- (238) DR. GNEISS
We have people helping us. It will not do for their interests -- or yours -- to have agents of the state following your real trail. As for your family, well, it will be better for them to face a stereotypical tragedy than your incomprehensible existential choice.
- (239) BRIONY
I regret the pain I shall cause them, but I just can't not do this.
- (240) MISS ZERKALOVA
I think it is a very brave and noble thing you are doing. Your clothes seem to fit me very well, it seems.
- (241) BRIONY
But do you think you can fool people into thinking you are me with your accent?
- (242) MISS ZERKALOVA
Oh, that.
(switches to a broad imitation of an American accent)
I think I can mimic an American pretty well if I need to.
(switching back to her native accent)
Your passport, documents, money, pleas?
- (243) BRIONY
Uh...
- (244) DR. GNEISS
You will not need any of that where you are going, Briony. Any more than you need your clothes.
- (245) BRIONY
They're all in this purse.

- (257) BRIONY
And how does that happen?
- (258) DR. GNEISS
Think the thoughts that excite you
about the possibility of your
transformation. Vocalize them aloud
if it helps you.
- (259) BRIONY
Okay...here goes.
(pause)
I am so beautiful...and I love the
way people look at me, excited by how
beautiful I am. I radiate excitement
and arouse lust and it reflects back
on me...
(pause)
...oh I'm starting to spin...
- (260) DR. GNEISS
Keep at it, Briony.
- (261) BRIONY
I love the feel of eyes upon me,
moving upon me. And now I know that
how beautiful I am will never decay.
I am going to become an extraordinary
object of beauty. Eyes will move on
me for centuries. Hands will move on
me in trembling longing.
(shift in tone)
Oh...I'm feeling hot!

There is a low HUMMING THROBBING NOISE that begins to rise
at this point and grows in intensity at this point.

(262)

BRIONY (cont'd)

I am going to be beautiful forever.
I am going to be what no other woman
could be.

(moans)

Oh I can feel the energy beginning to
surge and rise through me as I spin.
I feel so hot. I feel amazing. I
can feel it, the beginnings of energy
crackling through me.

(gasps and moans)

Things, all though me, beginning to
shine, melt, release their energies
that will transform my body. I can
feel it happening.

(pants, gasps and
moan)

Can it really be happening. Can it
be really be happening? Yes, I can
feel it.

(almost howls with
pleasure)

It's going to happen!

A CRACKLING sound marks the beginning of Briony's physical
transformation.

(263)

BRIONY (cont'd)

In my feet first. They're changing!
The transformation is moving up my
body. Oh God! Oh God! I'm really
changing. Up my shins...

(moans)

..up my thighs...Oh I can see it as
well as feel it...it's going to hit
my

(something like a
shriek of pleasure)

...now my belly oh god oh god not
that much of me left now my breasts
are hardening perfect shape preserved
forever ever ever

(vocalization like a
gurgle)

...ak...

Briony's ability to speak ceases as the transformation
engulfs her lungs and then her throat. The CRACKLING NOISE
and the HUMMING NOISE both continue until the last bit of
Briony's transformation is complete. The process ends with
POP and then both the crackling and humming abruptly cease.

Pause, then

- (264) DR. GNEISS
You may come out now, Marquis.
- Sound of DOOR OPENING.
- (265) THE MARQUIS
She did it! She actually achieved it! A perfect image of the woman that was now realized in pure white stone!
- (266) DR. GNEISS
I take it you found the experience of watching the transformation satisfying.
- (267) THE MARQUIS
I shall be seeing it in my dreams until I draw my final breath. May I touch her?
- (268) DR. GNEISS
Of course. It is quite safe.
- (269) THE MARQUIS
Amazing. I can feel through my fingertips the perfection of her curves, her lips, her breasts, her nipples, her buttocks, her lower lips. What a consolation this will be for my older age! Paintings, drawings, photographs one can no longer see when one's sight fails, as it always does with men in our family. But the sense of touch... that will not fail. She shall stand in a niche in my private study.
- (270) DR. GNEISS
Until your life itself fails, of course, Marquis.
- (271) THE MARQUIS
Yes. As all men's lives must. And when that day comes my executors shall have her moved to garden behind our ancestral villa, where she shall stand amidst the laurels and the spirea, and I shall be buried underneath her.

- (272) DR. GNEISS
She will outlast the villa and garden, I think. She may well outlast the human species itself.
- (273) THE MARQUIS
(suddenly more businesslike)
I shall arrange for your compensation, Dr. Gneiss, through appropriate channels.
- (274) DR. GNEISS
Most generous of you, Marquis. Please make sure to take your prize decently covered and down the back stairs. I am sure neither of us wants to have this operation exposed due to a clumsy last-minute error.
- (275) THE MARQUIS
Of course. The men in my service are well-trained in discretion. In the meantime, I take you intend to close your practice here?
- (276) DR. GNEISS
I think that would be prudent, yes. But I shall reopen in another place. Another college town, perhaps. They make such good grounds for recruiting.
- (277) THE MARQUIS
Recruiting? That's a curious way to describe your activities, doctor.
- (278) DR. GNEISS
I achieve my aims through neither force nor fraud, Marquis. I merely guide others along the way they always wanted to go. I sense talent and desire in others, and then I help them to reach their full potential.

18 INT. RADIO STUDIO - DAY
(Announcer)

(279)

ANNOUNCER

And there you have it, Ladies and
Gentlemen and those of you who are
beyond such categories, our story for
this evening. Be sure to tune in to
Thaumatoophile Dreams next week when
we will present you with another
story of the disturbing and the
strange.

OUTRO MUSIC

END.