

SCOPOPHOBIA

By Freya Stanton

Scene 1

Lights up. The stage is flooded with all the noise and movement typical of a busy city street, flashing lights and sounds and passers-by crashing into each other and moving around each other.

As everyone leaves, Note is left onstage with Lula, both holding a mobile phone. Note takes a deep breath as it rings once, twice, and she finally answers.

Lula: *(too cheerful)* Oh, you finally picked up! Been away from your phone for once, have you? *(laugh)* How have you been?

Note: Good.

Lula: You got my present? Has it arrived yet?

Note: Mhm.

Lula: Well? Do you like it?

Note: It's great, thanks mum.

Lula: Oh, *don't* be like that, angel-

Note tenses up.

-I'm sure you'll find somewhere for it!

Note: Yeah, I will.

Lula: So how are you doing up in the big city, hm? Not too much drinking, I hope!

Lula laughs. Note joins in half-heartedly, but it sounds almost forced.

Lula: Oh! You'll like this, you know Nicole?

Note *(definitely does not know Nicole)* Oh, yeah, her.

Lula: *Well*, guess what she's gone and done now?

Lula keeps talking, and Note keeps barely pretending to listen. After what seems like an inane amount of time, Christie enters, holding a box.

Christie: Yo Note, where do I put the- *(she winces)* Shit, should I come back later?

Note emphatically shakes their head, cutting into their mother's speech, which has somewhat devolved into general neighbourhood gossip.

Note: *(hurried)* Right, uh, gotta go, sorry.

There's a loud beep as the phone is hung up and shoved into Note's pocket. They sigh loudly.

Note: What is it?

Christie: *(shrugging and peering inside the box)* Some sorta angel decoration? Statue? I dunno, looks like it'd go good next to the Christmas tree though.

Note: The one you agreed to take down - what - three months ago?

Christie: Hey, no, this is an *eco-friendly* apartment. Team trees and all that.

Note: It's plastic.

Christie: It's reusable!

Note laughs and shrugs a bag onto their shoulder, speaking as they walk to the door.

Note: Put that on your resume. '*Christie Kerr, environmental hero*'. Someone's gotta take the bait.

Christie: God, I wish.

Note: *(calling behind them)* I'm getting takeout, you want anything?

Christie: *(calling back in a similar fashion)* I want to save the planet, Torryns!

The door shuts. Note is alone on the street.

Note: Huh. It's starting to rain. *(rushing back inside)*
Christie, I'm borrowing your umbrella!

Scene 2

The chaos returns for another few moments, before everyone disappears and Note is left alone, in the middle of closing a door.

Note: Alright, see you later!

The door closes. The sky is dark, and nothing moves but a slight turning in its folds.

Note: ...huh. That's...

They check their watch. 7am. They tentatively begin to look around, to no avail, before getting back to the door.

Note: Christie, do you know what's-

Pause. They shake the handle slightly.

Note: *(baffled)* This isn't my apartment.

They keep looking around, eventually beginning to call out.

Note: Hello? We having some parade or something? *Hello?*

Joseph: Hello?

They lock eyes for a moment, each as confused as the other.

Note: So... Clearing the streets?

Joseph: Is... is that what's happening?

Note: *(shrugs)* Not a clue. What time is it, by the way? My watch is out.

Joseph: *(checking his watch, frowning)* No, that can't be right. Mine must be out too. *(pause)* Sorry.

Note: S'fine, I can ask someone else.

Joseph: *(amused)* Have you seen anyone else?

Note: ...no.

They're silent for a moment, before Alice rushes onstage, out of breath. She leans on Joseph, but he pushes her off disdainfully.

Alice: You guys alive?

Joseph: *Excuse me?*

Alice: Cool, yeah, hi. This area off-limits or something? I can't find any signs, so y'know, legally, you can't really-

Note: *(holding up a hand)* We don't know either.

Alice: Oh.

Beat.

Cool.

They all stare at each other for a moment.

So... Alice. She/her. You?

Note: Note. Uh- Note Torryns, that is. They/them.

Joseph begins to leave, but is promptly interrupted by a clap of thunder that definitely should not have happened. He screams.

Joseph: *(sheepish)* Oh, ah, Joseph. Joseph Silvers. He/him.

Scene 3

There's a long pause. The sheer oddity of their situation is setting in, and all three are looking at their surroundings with confusion.

Note: So we're all in agreement that this is weird as hell, right?

Alice: No, yeah, I'm-

Joseph: *(impatient)* I really have better things to do than stand in an empty street and talk to you. No offense.

Note: Then... leave?

Joseph scoffs and turns to leave, but is once again interrupted, this time by Jamie entering from an empty street.

Jamie: I'm afraid that won't be possible.

Joseph: Excuse me?

Jamie: You heard me. *Leaving* isn't an option. Just thought I'd get it out of the way.

Joseph: What are you talking about?

Jamie: To put it in simple terms: wherever you were before, you aren't there now. And you can't go back.

Alice: Does anyone know this weirdo?

Jamie: You don't. I know you, of course - the Watcher sees all that occurs within its domain - but you don't know / me.

Alice: / Cool cool, do you have directions out of this city, though? It's a bloody labyrinth.

Jamie: That's intentional.

Alice: Dumb design if you ask me. You live here, then?

Jamie: I crafted this inescapable dreamscape from the subconscious minds of its inhabitants, / yes.

Alice: / Awesome, why does it have no signal?

Jamie: I'm going to ignore you.

Joseph: Cut to the chase. Who are you, who do you work for, and which lowbrow television show are we going to appear on?

Jamie: You can call me Jamie. I am priest of the Watcher - so I suppose you could say that's who I 'work for.' And, for the record, you aren't going to appear on TV. You are here solely for the entertainment and eventual satiation of my god.

Alice: So... love or host? 'Cause I'm into girls, just so you-

Jamie: You're going to kill each other.

Long pause.

Note: Sorry, what?

Jamie: *(slowly)* You are going to kill each other.

Alice: No, yeah, this still sounds like love or host.

Joseph: Nobody's killing anyone. Do I need to ring the nearest asylum?

Alice: I told you, no signal.

Jamie: You were trying to leave, weren't you? That's how you do it.

He draws three daggers from his pocket and holds them out.

Take one and kill someone with it. Simple. Feed the Watcher's bloodlust.

Pause.

Note: That's insane; we aren't doing that.

Jamie: Oh? Then I guess you aren't leaving.

Alice: *(clearly not paying attention)* Okay cool, do you have a map though? Or, like, directions?

Joseph: *(to himself)* Why is there no signal?

Note: What are you trying to do? Like, what is this? TV show? Youtube video? Cult initiation?

Jamie: 'Cult' is probably the closest descriptor. But that doesn't matter. *(he lays the daggers on the ground.)* If you want to get out, then kill someone. That's all.

Blatantly ignoring the barrage of questions being thrown at him, Jamie exits. Note is the first to speak.

Note: Okay. That was weird.

Alice: Yeah, what a prick.

Note: *(under their breath)* Language.

Alice: Does anyone have a GPS or something? My phone's acting up.

Joseph: No, mine's doing the same.

Note: No-one's gonna talk about the weirdo with the knives?

Joseph: What's there to talk about? Clearly, someone tried to pull a dumb prank. *(he leans down and picks up a dagger.)* An expensive prank, though. These must have cost- ow!

Just as Joseph accidentally draws blood, the sky begins to flash and swirl unnaturally, just for a moment.

Note: Holy / crap-

Alice: / *fucking hell!*

Note: Language.

Beat.

Joseph: Alright. That was... unexpected.

Note: What was that?

Jamie: *(from just behind Alice)* That was the watcher.

Alice: Jesus-! Where did you even come from?

Jamie: That doesn't matter.

Alice: Sounds like bullshit.

Jamie: I thought it was a bit early for blood to be drawn, anyway. Try not to do that again. Unless it's intentional, of course.

Note: Listen, I don't know what you're playing at, but nobody's killing anyone.

Jamie laughs.

Jamie: Of course you aren't. Nobody ever starts off with the intent to kill. But you'll get there eventually. You all / do.

Note: You're-

Alice: You're talking shit! Oh my god, *please* shut your mouth you pretentious asshole. 'Intent to kill' my ass. I bet you run a Tumblr blog.

Jamie: I haven't had access to the internet in years, try again. *(clears his throat.)* You are going to kill each other, though. It's inevitable. Trust me.

Alice: Yeah? You and what future vision?

Jamie: I don't need 'future vision' to know that at least one of you has already considered it.

Silence.

I'll be off, now. Call me if you need me. Trust me, I'll hear you.

Jamie exits. Further silence.

Alice: S'he actually gone now?

Joseph: I hope so.

Note: Probably.

Pause.

Joseph: This is weird.

Alice: Right? D'you reckon he's- uh- you know. Telling the truth?

Joseph: What, about us killing each other?

Note: Probably not, right? That's stupid, how would he even-
Their voice trails off.

Yeah, this is weird.

Alice: So... What do we do now?

Scene 4

Note, Alice, and Joseph are all walking amongst the streets of the not-quite-real city. The air is tense and forced, as if each person is pretending to the other that nothing's wrong. Alice is on her phone.

Alice: You tried the doors yet?

Joseph: Locked. All of them. Looks like there's no-one inside, either.

Note: Maybe not all of them. We haven't tried all of them.

Joseph: Most of them, then.

Alice: What about the windows?

Joseph: No way to open them, and I'm having no luck breaking them, either. It's not like there's any sign of movement anyway.

Alice: The... sewer grates? *(Upon Joseph's look of disbelief)* What? It was worth a shot.

Joseph: Look, I don't see you helping.

Alice: I'll have you know that I am *trying* to get in contact with someone. I'm totally helping.

Joseph: And how's that going for you?

Alice: ...not well.

Note: Yet.

Alice: Yet! There's no signal *here*, but there's gotta be somewhere, right?

Joseph: *(cynically)* Right. Good luck with that.

Note: Keep looking. We've just got to keep looking.

Alice: Uh, yeah? That's what we're doing, genius.

Note: Yep. Yeah, no, this is- this is fine! We're gonna be fine. This'll take no time at all, and we'll get back home, and-

Note's breath catches in their throat. The stress is getting to them, and it shows. Alice moves to comfort them.

Alice: Hey. Hey, yeah, no, you're probably right.

Note: Nobody'll notice we were even gone. No time at all. We just- we just need to find a way out. Right. Like we're doing. We- we need to-

Joseph: Keep doing what we're doing, yes. Not like there's much else we can do.

They spend some time looking around - nothing. Eventually, it gets dark.

Joseph: Alright. Not much good we can do looking around while we can't see, so... we set up camp. Find somewhere to rest.

Alice: Yeah, and you're *sure* having a nap in this watcher's murder-streets is a great idea?

Joseph: It's the only one we *have*.

Note: I can keep looking. We have to get out of here soon.
We- people will get worried.

Joseph: And they'll get even *more* worried if you get out and you're dead from sleep deprivation! Don't be an idiot.
Adapt.

Note: But-

Alice: I mean, I sorta agree, but... do we even know the place is safe?

Joseph: I doubt watcher-boy's going to hurt us, considering his whole 'kill each other' spiel, so unless you're worried that one of us fell for his speech... I'm pretty certain.

Pause.

Alice: Sure, fine, whatever. S'not too cold anyway, so I can get to sleep pretty easy. Note? You good with that?

Note: I don't- (*their voice trails off, and they take a deep breath*) Sure. That's- that's fine. I'm fine with that.

Joseph: So we're all in agreement? Fine. We'll carry on tomorrow.

*They all lie down in the middle of a street to get some rest.
Lighting change.*

Scene 5

It's dark. Alice sneaks away from the group and into an alleyway.

Alice: Hey priest-whatever! Get over here! I want to-
Spotlight.

Jamie: (*from behind her*) Hello.

Alice jumps.

Alice: Jesus- don't do that, weirdo. I wanted to talk about-

Jamie: I know what you want to talk about.

Alice: Really?

Jamie: Oh, no. I was kidding. Continue.

Alice: Alright, whatever, cool, that's not foreboding at all. Anyway. You said- um, earlier, when you said someone had already considered- you know-

Jamie: Oh, so it was about that? I should have kept bluffing.

Alice: Quit it, weirdo. Anyway, I wanted to know- uh- who-

Jamie: Who I was talking about? Who's to say I wasn't talking about you?

Alice: Uh, the fact that you'd be lying, for one. I haven't-

Jamie: Are you sure?

Alice: Pretty damn sure. You gonna answer or not?

Jamie sighs and steps forward.

Jamie: You know I can see you, right?

Alice: 'scuse me?

Jamie: I can see you. I can see every part of you. It's a perk of the Watcher's favour.

Alice: Yeah, okay, quit being dramatic and-

She freezes. Panic overcomes her body like a virus; she can't move.

Jamie: *(not once taking his eyes from Alice)* There's no use lying to me. Or to yourself, for that matter. Oh, you've tried to hide it, sure - bury that urge deep within yourself and lie your way out of feeling it - but you can't lie to me.

Alice: Why- why would I ask you if I was the one who-

Jamie: Because you wanted to convince yourself? Because you had almost succeeded? / "He must have been talking about someone else, and I'll prove it."

Alice: / *(as if the words are being dragged out of her)* "He must have been talking about someone else, and I'll prove it."

Jamie: That's what you were thinking, wasn't it? You just didn't count on the fact that I would know that.

Alice: You don't know *shit*-

Jamie: Oh, I certainly do. What I don't know, however, is *why* you're so intent on hiding it.

Alice: ...what?

Jamie: *(finally breaking eye contact)* I can see what you're hiding, sure, but *why* you want to keep it hidden is a mystery to me. Everyone wants to be free. It's in your nature. You aren't evil for just considering killing.

Alice: You aren't going to manipulate me into killing someone, you freak of nature.

Jamie: I don't have to. You already know I'm right. Think of how many people need you.

Alice: Okay, how would you even-

Jamie: All-seeing, remember? Keep up.

Alice: You know what? I don't care! We'll get out of your dumb hellscape some other way; I'm not selfish enough to murder someone for my own goddamn freedom!

Jamie: Selfish?

The air is filled with voices. Alice covers her ears.

Surely, it would be selfish of you to stay here. So many people need you. They *rely* on you. One life in exchange for the comfort of thousands is a fair exchange, wouldn't you agree?

Alice: Shut- shut up.

Jamie: Besides, who's to say that these others are even real? Who's to say they aren't just hallucinations - a test of will? Odds are, you aren't even saving a real person.

Alice: Shut up!

Jamie: Maybe you're staying here for nothing. Maybe you're worrying thousands, for nothing. But it's okay. You'll be replaced, in time.

Alice: Please. Please be quiet.

Jamie: You'll be forgotten. You'll stay here, forever, and the world will forget about you. Until one of the others gets tired, and kills you. Is that what you want?

Alice: Stop.

Jamie: I *know* that isn't what you want.

Alice: Stop! I don't want to kill anyone!

Silence.

Jamie: As you wish.

Jamie exits, leaving Alice alone onstage for a moment. She takes a deep breath, stands up, and exits the other direction.

Scene 6

Note, Alice, and Joseph are sat cross-legged in the middle of a road. It's completely silent, and there is an oppressive air of hopelessness.

Alice: *(quietly)* We aren't getting out of here, are we?

Note: No- no, we'll find a way. We'll definitely find a way. And when we do, we'll get back, and we can all introduce ourselves properly. And we can talk normally. Not, y'know, like / this.

Joseph: / shut up.

Beat.

Note: Sorry?

Joseph: You heard me. Shut up. Stop acting like everything's fine, it's pissing me off.

Note: Lan/guage.

Alice: *(singsong)* / Language!

Joseph: See, that's what I mean! You're acting like everything's normal, like everything's *fine*, like we're not trapped in some- some weird nightmare hellscape and being told to fight like pit animals!

Note: I'm *trying* to stay calm.

Alice: You guys need to-

Joseph: This isn't a calm situation! Just yell at someone! Scream, or panic, or accept it, or something! Just stop acting like we can get out of this by *lying* to ourselves.

Note: Panicking isn't going to help. Neither is pessimism. We'll be fine if we-

Joseph: Don't. Say. Anything. I'm not going to lie to you to make you feel more comfortable, so how about this: we aren't getting out of here. Not like this, anyway. We're going to waste away and *die* - if that's even possible here - and we're never going to see our families again.

Note: You're being unrealistic.

Joseph: *I'm* being unrealistic? Listen to yourself! You're still acting like this is some bloody prank!

Note: Well, what do you want me to do?

Beat.

I'm scared. Of course I'm scared - who wouldn't be? I'm freaking out! We might never get out of here, or worse, one of us could *die*.

Alice: (*murmured*) *Would that be worse?*

Note: But I'm not going to panic everyone *else* over it. What would be the point? It'd only make things worse. I'm trying to be reasonable, here.

Joseph: *Lying* isn't reasonable.

Note: I'm not lying!

Joseph: You're certainly not being truthful. Not with us, and not with yourself.

A pause. The tension is palpable.

I'm going to look for a way out.

Alice: Didn't we already-

Joseph: Don't follow me.

Note: Joseph, *please* be reasonable, we have to-

Joseph: No, we don't *have to* do anything. For all I know, you only want me here so you can kill me.

Note: Don't be stupid!

Joseph: Then don't follow me.

Scene 7

There's a long, tense pause as they stand and watch Joseph until he's out of sight. Light rain is starting to fall.

Note: Shall we - uh - sit down?

Alice: That's... probably for the best.

They both sit down in the middle of the empty street. For a moment, it's eerily silent.

Alice: Hey.

Note: Hm?

Alice: You don't- you don't really think we're gonna get out of here, do you?

Note: (*hastily*) I mean- I wouldn't rule it out, definitely, we've got loads of time to figure something out, and I'm sure

with the three of- *(beat.)* with the two of us. The two of us can figure something out.

Alice: Or we could just kill someone?

The joke doesn't land. Note forces out a laugh, and it's silent again. Alice sighs.

Alice: What were you doing? Before you ended up here, I mean.

Note: Oh, uh, me? I was just, uh... Not much, to be honest. I was- I mean, I *am*- a student.

Alice: What were you studying?

Note: Drama. I- uh- want to be an actor. *(beat.)* What about you?

Alice laughs.

Alice: I was a streamer. Played video games for money. I mean, it wasn't, like, a proper job, but it was... it was good, y'know? I had a decent following, bunch of losers - affectionately, obviously - donating money to me like 'Alice you're my comfort streamer' 'Alice, your streams helped me through a dark period in my life' 'Alice, you distract me from the tragedy of existence' 'Alice, you stopped me from committing *suicide!*'

I say that like it's a bad thing, but I loved it. Y'know, I was... I was helping people. And if I could prop up my family with money from people who thought I was entertaining, then... I wouldn't complain. I was helping them, too. I want to keep helping people.

Note: Alice, I'm so / sorry.

Alice: / I can't stay here, Note. I have people who- who depend on me. People who need me.

As Note speaks, Alice begins to reach into her pocket.

Note: If there's anything I can do-

Alice: I'm sorry. You have the least to lose.

Before Note can respond, Alice swings at them with a pocket-knife. It stabs deep into their arm and they cry out in pain and pull back as the wind picks up and the sky becomes a swirling mass of red and grey.

Note: I- I already told you we could get out of here! You don't have to-

Alice: Shut up! Shut the fuck up! Oh, boohoo, the poor little actor doesn't want to die - get over yourself! I don't want to stay here forever!

Note: He was *lying*, Alice, I'm sure he was! He was lying to you!

Alice: You know, I don't think he was. I think you're being *pathetic* right now. God, just lay down and die!

Note: Alice, *please*.

Alice pauses. There is fear, deep and visceral, visible on her whole body. She looks behind her, still holding the knife above Note's chest.

Alice: I can feel it.

Note: Sorry?

As Alice speaks, Jamie walks onstage and slowly towards her, never averting his eyes from her speech.

Alice: (*hysterical, drawing into herself*) I can feel it watching! It's looking through me, staring, thousands of tiny eyes boring into my skin like worms; they're inside me, they see through me and they won't come out and it *hurts* Note. It hurts so much. I want to get out. I can't stay here.

Note: (*addressing Jamie*) What did you do to her?

Alice: *I can't stay here.*

Jamie: (*softly*) I know. I understand. It'll be over soon.

Alice: Note, I'm *sorry*.

Jamie: I was like you once. It'll all be over soon.

Note holds up their arms in front of them.

Note: Wait!

Everything stops.

He's... he's lying. He must be.

Alice: Please don't do this again.

Note: No, *listen to me!*

Beat. Alice is staring, distant.

Jamie Torryns. Disappeared from home at sixteen.

Jamie: (*fierce*) It's been long enough. Listen to me. Do it.

Note: I wasn't old enough to know what happened. One day he was there, holding me in his arms, and the next, he had gone. And nobody ever told me what happened to him.

Jamie: Alice, do it.

Note: My parents, I... I resented them for so long. I *hated* that I couldn't know, that they would change the subject whenever I asked them where he had gone, that they would act like he had never left, *to my face*, even while I heard them mourning him when they thought I couldn't hear.

Jamie: You want to leave, don't you?

Note: I started acting like them, at some point. I thought that if they could be so cheerful, then I just needed to as well. As if that would solve everything. As if I could just pretend he never disappeared.

Jamie: Do it.

Note: But he was there, and now he's not.

Jamie: (*desperate*) Do it!

Note: Did *you*?

Pause.

Jamie: I don't know what you mean.

Note: Did you kill someone to get out of here? Did you - what - 'feed the watcher's bloodlust'?

Jamie: I did.

Note: And did Jamie Torryns ever come back?

Long pause.

Alice: (*quiet*) You lied to me.

Jamie: Would you rather be a prisoner or a jailor, Alice? Predator or prey?

Alice: (*louder*) You *lied* to me.

Jamie: You won't leave, of course you won't, but how does that matter, in the end? The power over life and death, to simply blink a consciousness from the waking world, *that* is far more worth killing for than a mortal life that could simply *end* at any moment. I'm doing you a favour, Alice.

Alice: You made me hurt them!

Jamie: I didn't *make* you do anything. You valued your continued existence over theirs, and you acted on it. Now, it's time to act again. Sever your ties with the world you used to inhabit and act on the value of your eternal existence! Or die here, weak and alone, having lost the trust of your only companions simply for caring about yourself. It's your / choice.

Note: / What are you on about?

Beat. Every eye is turned on Note.

I still trust her. Yeah sure, she tried to kill me, but that was mostly your fault.

Jamie: That isn't true.

Note: Okay, yeah, sure, maybe I'm being naïve and she's just gonna stab me in the back later, but... it's not like I blame her for being manipulated by some lunatic cultist?

Alice drops the knife. The rain dies down a little.

Alice: You probably should, though.

Note: (*shrugging*) Not like I've got anyone else to talk to.

Scene 8

Joseph makes an entrance, very clearly disoriented.

Joseph: Wh- I- what just happened?

Note: aaand he's back. Way to make an entrance, drama queen.

Joseph: It just leads back here. Why does it all lead back here? I walked in every cardinal direction for at *least* an hour and it always-

Note: It has *not* been an hour.

Joseph: (*muttering*) Felt like it.

Note: Quit being dramatic and help. How are we gonna get out?

Jamie: You / can't-

Note: / Shut up, you. We're thinking.

Joseph: I'm pretty sure I just confirmed that we can't just walk out.

Alice: We literally knew that already.

Joseph: Well- I've made sure. Certainty is important.

Note: So what do we do now? We've gotta be able to do something.

Jamie: You can't / get out.

Note: Shut up. You wouldn't know.

Alice: We could test the doors? See if any of them lead anywhere they shouldn't.

Joseph: It's worth a shot. Even if it does seem like video game logic.

Note: Yeah, that's worth a / try.

Jamie: You can't get out, I've tried!

Pause.

(speaking as if reading from a book) The person who is killed just dies and feeds the Watcher. The murderer becomes a jailor. The act of taking another person's life destabilises this dreamscape and the uninvolved party is destroyed along with it.

Pause.

I've seen it happen again and again. Somebody always gets desperate. No matter how much they plead, or beg, or god forbid *hope*, they always get desperate. And then it repeats. I just learned to embrace it, rather than whining.

Note: You didn't try to stop it?

Jamie: Stop it? How can you *stop* humanity's most intrinsic urge? They all want freedom. They all think they're worth more than the other. They all resort to murder. They all end up like me.

I'm sure some of them did try. I'm also sure nobody succeeded.

Note: And you weren't one of them? The ones who tried to stop it?

Beat.

Jamie: If I was, I'm not anymore. The only way to stop it is to kill.

Slowly, Alice picks up the dagger. She turns it in her hands once, twice, three times.

Alice: Does it have to be someone else?

Note: *(sternly)* Alice, no.

Alice: No, really! What happens if someone... you know. *(she mimes a stabbing motion towards herself.)*

Jamie: I don't... know. It's never happened before.

Alice: So if I-

Note: That's not happening.

All eyes are on Note.

We're getting out of here together. *Nobody* is dying. I don't care how many problems it would solve.

Jamie: That's not how this works. That's never been how this / works.

Note: / Shut up! Just because you're too much of a coward to try doesn't mean you have to interfere with us.

Silence.

Piss off.

After a beat of stunned silence, Jamie nods and exits.

Joseph: I can't believe I missed you growing a spine.

Note: Don't push it.

Joseph: If you say so.

Pause.

So... what do we do now?

Blackout, everyone exits.

Scene 9

Everyone enters, looking significantly more stressed than before.

Note: God, we've tried *everything!*

Alice: *(twirling the dagger)* Not everything!

Note: Shut up.

Jamie: Told you so.

Note: You shut up too.

Alice: Seriously, I honestly don't mind trying. Worst case scenario, nothing happens, right?

Jamie: Actually, worst case scenario is that the dreamscape collapses and you all cease to exist.

Beat.

But that's unlikely. So I'm all for it.

Joseph: Why are you acting like you're on our side? You are *not* on our side. If I had it my way, it'd be you being killed.

Jamie: *(shrugging)* Nothing better to do. You're all clearly too stupid and naive to start killing yet. And hey, I'd be happy to comply, but I actually can't die, so... no can do.

Joseph: *(incredulous)* What do you mean you *can't die*?

Jamie: Exactly what I said. No matter how much you try to hurt me, I will never die. I also can't feel pain, so there's that.

Alice: Why?

Jamie: I'm a jailor. It would defeat the point if the captives could just murder me.

Joseph: Better question: how?

Jamie: Not sure. Best guess is that I'm intrinsically connected to these dreamscapes, or something. Every time a new one's created, I come back with it. Or something like that.

Alice: So much for "I can see everything."

Jamie: Yeah, well, so much for "I don't want to kill anyone."

Alice: Touche, weirdo.

Note: *(suddenly)* Hey, Alice?

Alice turns around.

Can you come with me a sec? Away from... you know.

Alice: Why? Got a big love confession before I-

Note: Please.

Pause.

Alice: Yeah, okay. *(leaving, to Jamie and Joseph)* Try not to kill each other, will you?

Alice and Note exit, leaving Jamie and Joseph very much alone. The possibility of Alice's joke coming to light looks very real.

Scene 10

Jamie: So, question-

Joseph: I'm not talking to you.

Jamie: Okay, rude, but indulge me for a moment. Why haven't you considered killing anyone?

Joseph: We are *not* doing this.

Jamie: No, really, it's a genuine question. Sure, you have the most to lose if you stay here, but you were also the first one to just... completely give up. Why is that?

Joseph: I don't need to talk to you. We aren't friends.

Jamie: Well I'm wounded, really, but it's more out of genuine curiosity than a desire for companionship. I was betting on you being the first to try. It was a little disappointing when you just... gave up, just like that.

Joseph: I haven't given up.

Jamie: Oh, don't make me pull the 'all-seeing' card again. For someone so mad about *Note's* little optimism problem, you sure do make a habit of lying to yourself.

Beat.

Joseph: What's that supposed to mean?

Jamie: Exactly what I said. It's a bad habit of yours.

Joseph: You don't know me.

Jamie: I know you well enough to know that you aren't who you say you are.

Joseph: *(startled)* What did you say?

Jamie: *(suddenly uninterested)* Oh, did I get it right?

Joseph grabs Jamie by the collar. Suddenly, it's a physical confrontation.

Joseph: No, don't play dumb now. You don't *get* to play dumb. Tell me what you know. Everything.

Jamie: That'd take a while.

Joseph: Quit it with your stupid quips and *tell me what you know*, or I'll- *(grasping for a threat)* I'll, ah-

Jamie: (*effortlessly releasing himself from Joseph's grip*) No worries. I know what you mean. I know *exactly* what you mean.

Joseph: Just-

Jamie: You felt unwanted, and I don't blame you. Not in the slightest. I certainly can't act like you're a bad person for committing murder, even before this... situation.

Joseph: I didn't-

Jamie holds up a hand, and Joseph sinks.

So you *do* know. Is that a stalker thing, or..?

Jamie: Special perk of serving the watcher. I won't go into details.

Joseph: It wasn't ... It wasn't selfish, you know? (*upon Jamie's disbelieving look*) Okay, well, maybe it was. But that's not a bad thing. I was entirely justified.

Jamie: Do you want to talk about it? I don't have the specifics, but I'm aware you haven't, before. So you might as well. Since you're stuck here forever, and all.

Joseph pauses. Sighs. And starts speaking.

Joseph: I was sixteen. Far too young to know how unrealistic my idea was, but smart enough to feasibly pull it off. My brother was... talented. Likeable. *Wanted*. Sure, we were twins, so we looked the same, but he was so different from me that he quickly gained the spot of the *favourite child*. Golden and shining and *insufferably* friendly. I just... I couldn't hate him. As much as I wanted to, as much as I so, so desperately wished that his achievements could inspire some sort of righteous vitriol, he was just... perfect. And I wasn't.

So I didn't hate him, okay? That's not why I did it. I just wanted to *be* Joseph Silvers. I wanted to know what it felt like to be wanted, to be *seen* - and that's nothing to do with your stupid watcher - so I... I went through with it. It's always been something I'd thought of doing - some intrusive thought in the back of my mind that felt unfortunately satisfying to indulge in when I was alone. But when we turned sixteen, becoming my brother became... sort of...

Jamie: An obsession?

Joseph: ...Sure. So I- well, I don't want to say I *killed* him.

Jamie: You did, though.

Joseph: Not- not really! Officially, I killed Alistair Silvers.

Jamie: *Officially*, there was a freak accident in which Alistair Silvers fell off a cruise ship and drowned.

Joseph: You said you didn't know the specifics.

Jamie: I lied. Carry on.

Joseph (*sighing*) So, sure. I cut my hair like his, wore clothes like his, even wore these stupid glasses until my eyes got used to them and I *actually* needed glasses. And I don't regret stealing his identity in the slightest, because becoming Joseph Silvers was the best thing that ever happened to me.

Jamie: Maybe not. (*curious*) Do you regret killing him, though?

Joseph: I don't need to answer that.

The two murderers sit in silence for a moment. They stay that way until Note and Alice come back.

Scene 11

Everybody is gathered in the same place. The air is tense and suffocating for everybody but Alice, who twirls a knife in her hand as if it were a twig.

Joseph: And you're sure?

Alice: (*shrugging*) Worth a shot, isn't it.

Note: It *absolutely*-

Alice: Note. Please.

Silence. Alice looks at Jamie, who shrugs.

Jamie: I won't stop you, if that's what you mean. If Note couldn't dissuade you, then I certainly won't be able to.

Alice: You're not gonna - I dunno - use your spooky watcher powers and make the knife disintegrate before I can- y'know-

Jamie: Why, do you want me to?

Alice pauses. Rather than responding verbally, she shakes her head.

Then I won't. I can try to influence your wishes, but I've no right to interfere. I'm not even sure I can.

Joseph: Well, I know *that's* a lie.

Jamie: Excuse me? Please tell me where I interfered with this process at all, other than maybe nudging Alice here a *little* closer to something she already wanted to do.

Alice: Dick.

Note: (*muttered*) Language.

Jamie: Like I said. I can influence, but not interfere. Drag out motives that are already there. And even my persuasiveness has a limit.

Note: You're saying Alice wanted to do that *before* you had your creepy little chat? Yeah, right.

Jamie: That's exactly what I'm saying. And I'm not lying, either, she was just as down for murder as / Al-

Joseph: *Shut up.*

Jamie: (*feigning surprise*) Oh, you haven't told them?

Alice: Told us what?

Joseph: Don't pretend you didn't know that already. (*sighing*) It's fine. I'll... explain later. Preferably once we get out.

Alice appears as if she's going to object, but shuts herself down and takes a deep breath. Her hands have stopped moving.

Alice: That's my cue, right?

Note: Alice, if you don't want to, nobody's making you do this; we can find-

Alice: No, we can't.

Jamie: (*simultaneously*) No, you can't.

Alice and Jamie look at each other. Alice nods and steps back.

I mean it. I very much doubt that *this* will even work, but it's the only thing I've never seen done before. At this point, it's your only option. Trust me.

Note: Yeah, and how would you / know?

Jamie: / You think I wanted this, don't you?

Beat.

In a way, you'd be right. I certainly wasn't lied to like you were: I knew I wasn't getting out. Or, rather, that's what I

was led to believe. I didn't really give up until a few years in, seeing two lovers kill their own son to escape together. *(laughing)* The shock on their faces when they realised I'd lied to them, that their son was dead and one of them was about to spend an eternity seeing other people suffer like they did... if it were anyone else, it probably would have haunted them for the rest of their life. But not me. I've seen worse since then.

Honestly, when I killed that boy, I just wanted a different situation. The jailor sitting there with that smug, condescending voice lording over us like we were *animals*... At least I had the decency to speak to you. I wanted out as soon as possible. So I killed him. Slit his throat, quick and painless. Or, it was supposed to be. I think I did it wrong - cut the wrong vein, or something - because it took him seven minutes. Clutching at my coat like a rabid animal and begging me to stop the bleeding. Of course, I only know what he was *trying* to say with hindsight. You can't enunciate very well when you're choking on your own blood.

The last words he said were fairly clear, though. I could *feel* his grip slipping, trembling like a frightened cat with that quick, shallow breathing. I knew he was dying. So I listened, for any final request, or curse, or *anything*, because I at least owed him closure.

"At least get out for me." You know, I think that was the worst thing he could have said. At least cursing me out wouldn't have left me trying to achieve the impossible for so many *pointless* years before I finally gave up.

He laughs. There's no humour in it, just a desensitised nonchalance and the willing resignation of somebody so wholly shattered.

What I'm saying is that there's no point trying. Because if there was any other exit, I wouldn't be here.

There's a long silence. Jamie is the first to turn and speak, demeanour totally changed.

Any-way, enough about that. Alice, aren't you supposed to be-
Note runs up to Jamie and hugs him. It's the first real touch he's had in a long time.

Note: *(quietly)* You don't have to say anything.

Jamie: There's nothing to say.

Note: There's *so much* to say.

Joseph: (*awkwardly patting Jamie on the back*) You're still an asshole. But for your victim's sake, I hope you're able to leave.

Jamie: You too, Silvers.

Joseph: Nevermind, I hope you rot.

Alice: ...damn. (*pause.*) I mean, I might as well get it over with, right?

Note: You don't have to-

Alice: No, I do. After that? What else am I *supposed* to do? I'm damn well not giving up like he did. (*At Jamie's affronted noise.*) Oh, get over it. You made us try to kill each other; we're allowed to make fun of you.

Jamie: I didn't *make* you-

Alice: Shut the hell up and let me kill myself.

Pause.

Jamie: You know there's a good chance you won't *actually* die, right?

Alice: (*laughing nervously*) Yeah, that's what I'm banking on.

Jamie: But it's a very real possibility.

Alice: Way to make me more confident.

Note: It's way too much of a possibility, really, you don't have to-

Alice: What, you'd rather just live here? Forever? With only us and murder-boy for company?

Note: That's not-

Alice: Because I don't. I have things to do. And if I can't do that, I'd rather have closure in actually dying than live like *this* for god-knows how long. Like, saving you two - maybe three - is a bonus, and all, but this isn't selfless. I'm doing this for myself, and I'm doing it *no matter what*, because hell, I don't have many other options, do I?

Note: ...right.

Alice: So you can't stop me. So stop trying.

Note: Got it.

Alice: Right. Let's get it over with, then.

She holds the knife up to her chest - then her arms - then her neck. Jamie points at the side of her neck, marking out her carotid artery.

Jamie: That's probably quickest.

Alice: *(scoffing)* Yeah, because you're historically great at choosing the best place to kill someone.

Joseph: *(wincing)* Ouch.

Despite her remarks, she holds the knife up to her neck, hands shaking despite herself.

Alice: I should probably say something poetic, right? In case I don't make it?

Whatever. Just get the hell out for me.

Alice steels herself and cuts through the vein in her neck. The sky cracks. Blackout.

Scene 12

Note stands alone onstage, mobile phone in hand. They dial, and it rings twice before picking up. Lula enters.

Note: Hi mum.

They quickly realise they don't know what to say, looking despairingly offstage for some guidance. Joseph enters, shrugging.

Joseph: Don't look at me. Just tell her you're sorry, or something? *(At Note's questioning glance)* What? You said you were rude to her, right? Parents like apologies, don't they?

Lula: Hey sweetie! How've you been? You don't usually call me, must be something special going on!

Note: *(clearly nervous)* Maybe I- maybe I just... wanted to... talk to you? Normally?

Alice enters, grinning, and Note quickly covers the receiver as if in anticipation.

Alice: *(yelling)* Your kid's been blazing it, Miss Torryns! *(In response to Note's frantic shushing)* So tell her already, you weirdo! I'm bored!

Lula: Aw, come on, don't change your mind now! I'm your mother! You can tell me anything, I won't freak out. I'm cool.

Note: Right. So- uh- hypothetically, what would you, um- I mean, remember..? I mean... how's... your day? Been?

Lula: It's been great, honey. You?

Note: Right- right! So- I mean, what- I mean- I- what I'm meaning to say is, ah-

Jamie enters, sighing, shoves both Joseph and Alice out of the way, snatches the phone from Note and holds the receiver up to his face.

Jamie: I'm home.

Lula drops her phone in shock. Blackout.