

ESSENTIAL MAGICK

By

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Characters & Setting

Characters

CLAUDIA late 30s

BREANNA Claudia's daughter, age 13

Setting

A suburban home, present day. Breanna is in her bedroom, Claudia is in the "breakfast nook" area of a kitchen. The stage may be virtually bare, although a small night table with drawers is suggested for Breanna's "room". More set elements may be used to suggest other aspects of these rooms if desired, but the preference should be for enough openness on the set to allow for the feeling of a flow of energy from actor to actor.

Notes

Both characters are onstage throughout.

ESSENTIAL MAGICK

A suburban home, present day. CLAUDIA, late 30's, is in the breakfast nook of a suburban kitchen. BREANNA, age 13, is in her bedroom.

CLAUDIA

I still think it's good that she has her own room. But I worry. I know I can be prone to worry. But since she's become a witch, I do worry about her having her own room. It's not so much the witch part, I mean, her *being* a witch, that's my ... area of concern. I know that sounds strange, but, at least the way she explains it to me, a twenty-first century witch is relatively benevolent. I mean, nobody's cackling over a cauldron or anything. It's more a worship of the "aliveness" of nature. In everything. In the world.

(beat)

I know she'd say I'm not expressing it very well. But I think I've got the general gist. No, it's, it's not the witch stuff so much as all the time she's been spending alone in her room. With the door shut. Since around the time she *became* a witch. Jim says that's typical for a thirteen year old. But he doesn't know about the cutting. The cuts. I don't know why I haven't told him. One day, we had a little heat spell and he asked her why she was wearing long sleeves and she said, "Have you ever seen a witch with short sleeves?" and he laughed.

(beat)

The cuts have been going on for a while. Since before she became a witch. So they're not, y'know, part and parcel.

(beat)

I remember a joke she liked, it was written on one of those wax dixie cups at her Halloween party when she was ... nine. I still remember what the cup looked like, it was purple and there was this jack o' lantern with a skinny little body and he's talking to this witch, this kind of plump witch with green skin, and he asks, "What happened when the little witches ate all their witchtable soup?" And then you turn the cup, and he says, "They gruesome." And you see the witch's reaction, she's like:

Claudia throws up her hands and puts on a horrified expression, cartoon style.

CLAUDIA (cont'd)

And Breanna ... Breanna ... just kept giggling. And saying, "That's so stupid."

(beat)

"That's so *stupid*, I love it."

(beat)

That was four years ago. Not even.

(beat)

Sometimes I go for hours thinking of nothing but her. The day slips by.

LIGHTS UP on BREANNA. Her speech is racing. Periodically throughout, she bangs her fist(s) on the floor, on her knees, etc., (both as noted and wherever else the actress chooses).

BREANNA

So I asked David for a salt packet, a lousy salt packet, he had a bunch of them on his tray and I didn't want to go all the way up to the front, maybe lose my seat, I really did want the salt packet, a couple, it's not like we're strangers and that fucking Jessica --

(bangs her fist on the floor)

-- it's like a fucking fishbowl you can't do anything and I was so stupid to ask him, to sit there, I was stupid, I ask for a salt packet and she says,

(in a mocking voice:)

"Oh Davey, please give me..."

(Pause -- it's painful to get the words out.)

"Please give me ..."

(bangs the floor)

"... give me your crumbs."

(She hits herself.)

Stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid. Why did I sit there, why did I sit there?

(beat)

I could feel him across the table, I could feel him without touching, feel his skin against me again, our skin together, our skin is meant to be together, he treats me like a stranger, he gave me the salt like a stranger in public but I felt his skin against mine across the table with our clothes on I can still feel him and I know he has to feel mine, he has to feel mine again, he didn't have to give me the salt packet, that's why he didn't look at me, he couldn't look at me, because he felt us together, naked, across the table, if you gave a packet of salt to a stranger, you'd look at them, you'd say something, "Here", you'd say, but he felt me, melting into him, and I didn't leave, I didn't leave, I couldn't leave, I sprinkled the salt on the green beans and I tasted him and I heard them giggling, not him, the others, they giggled and I tasted him in the salt and they sounded so far away. I have to see the magick. I have to see the magick in it all. I'll die if I don't. I will die. They all want to calm me and they want to kill me. They'll kill me. I can't be calm. Not their calm. They want to leave me with myself. I can only be part of the all. Or I'll die. It's crazy to listen to them.

Beat.

CLAUDIA

Sometimes I find her embarrassing. And then I hate myself for that. I see her as a reflection of me and I shouldn't.

(MORE)

CLAUDIA(cont'd)

No, that's not it, that's not it. She *is* a reflection of me. In some way. I'm her mother, for chrissake. I just shouldn't be embarrassed by her. Period.

(beat)

I wish she was happier. Teens are very intense, I was very intense, if I look back, if I think back, if I feel back, I can feel back, it wasn't that long ago. Like all these different ethers and potions are pouring around inside of you, I'm not just talking raging hormones, I can remember sitting in class and feeling a blackness wrap around my brain like hot tar and I didn't even know why. No reason. And then, then, uh, conversely, conversely, coming out of class, another class, a teacher I had a kind of a crush on, he praised a paper of mine, I still remember, it was about the plumbing systems of the ancient Mayans, and the effect, the effect of indoor running water on their culture, and he said, "This is the product of a deep and probing mind." And I came out of that class and ran down the hall and kicked my feet up, way up on the wall so that I could see the footprints up there every day until I graduated.

(beat)

I just wish she had more friends. The last person she's going to listen to is her mother. I asked her, "Don't witches belong to covens?" and she says, "Some do and some don't" and shuts her door. And then I realize that I am actually wishing that my thirteen year old daughter would join a nice coven. I mean, it's amazing where life can take you. This is not what I would have predicted for myself. Off the charts. Sometimes I think that it's because I've become more open minded -- that, y'know, wanting my daughter to join a nice coven is due to some amazing growth process on my part. And then sometimes I think I've lowered my standards so much that it's finally come to this.

BREANNA

They say to me things that they don't know -- she, especially, the one downstairs, she thinks it's cute, she says, "Maybe you'll meet a nice Warlock" and I say, "Warlock means 'traitor', Warlock means 'oath-breaker', literally, look it up, mother, educate yourself, there are no nice Warlocks, the nice boys are witches, they're male witches, wrap your brain around *that* one." And then I say, "I've known a Warlock, mother, I've known a Warlock very well, " and as the words come out I know I'm wrong, I know this is where I'm fucking up because I know I drove him away.

(MORE)

BREANNA (cont'd)

We found the witches magick, we found it together, "essential energy", "essential energy" they call it, not the other "they" but *our* "they", "they"-the-wise, of the energy that flows from the gods to the humans to the vines to the rocks and he brought it to me, we brought it to each other and inside me, him inside me, I changed to the energy, the incredible energy of *us*, from inside and out, [changed my *form*,] from solid to liquid to air to all combined, flowing, not just *me*, so beyond *me*, and they, the other they, the common they, they say that boys just ...

(bangs her fist)

... they just ...

(bangs her fist)

... they just ...

(She continues to bang her fist)

CLAUDIA

I read about a girl, a teenage girl in Vermont who killed her mother. With knives. I don't picture that happening in Vermont. Vermont's always seemed so peaceful. The last of the 50 states to open a Wal-Mart.

BREANNA

... they just *leave*.

(pause)

And that ... explanation ... is so *small*. He couldn't just leave because he's part of us and *I* didn't leave.

CLAUDIA

The policeman asked her how she could hate her mother so much. And she said, "I don't hate my mother. I love my mother. I wanted her to feel. I wanted to give her the greatest moment of her life."

During the following, Breanna goes to a night table, opens a drawer, takes out a small box, and removes a pair of curved cuticle scissors.

BREANNA

They say it wasn't because of me, but I know it was me. I drove him away. Because of the need. I betrayed us. With the need. Because it was smaller than us. [I wasn't, I wasn't, I wasn't ... holding my own. Because I had the need.] And that hurt him. And he went away. That's why.

CLAUDIA

And I keep picturing it in my mind. I saw her picture, the girl. She looked like a little girl. And the mother, I don't see her face, I see her torso and limbs. And they're in a woodsy kind of kitchen, homey, but dark. With a butcher block in the middle. A worn, wood butcher block.

BREANNA

I was selfish and stupid and we touched the magick of the highest creatures and I was stupid ...

She slashes the cuticle scissor in a straight line across her arm. Claudia sits upright.

BREANNA (cont'd)

...and selfish...

(another slash)

...and needy...

(another slash)

...and small...

She continues to slash herself -- not constantly -- she may rest at times, then start again -- throughout the following.

CLAUDIA

I see the knife, a long knife, slash into her, the woman, into her waist. And again across her chest. And the top of her body, it opens up, it falls back, against the butcher block, exposing the muscle beneath, like slicing into a ripe, tropical fruit. And the woman's eyes, I see her eyes open wide, they're azure and the whites are veined like marble but I don't see her face. And the flesh, and the meat, the dark, red meat beneath the flesh, it's oddly beautiful. The muscles move, they twitch and they squirm and they flow into each other beneath that pale, pale flesh, it's like picking up a rock and finding shiny red bugs swarming beneath, beautiful and horrible and so terribly alive. And the force, the energy of that knife, the first time I imagined this, I couldn't be the girl, I could only be the mother and that frightened me because it was not because I'm a mother but because of who I am, I knew that was why, and that frightened me. And I pictured it again, and again, and again, I kept being drawn back to it, and more and more I felt myself as the little girl, going with the force of that knife, slicing into the mother again and again and I couldn't help but think ... I know this is awful, but I couldn't help myself from thinking ... what a remarkable little girl. That she didn't turn on herself. I know that's sick but ... Breanna ... I feel so helpless.

Silence. Breanna is finished slashing.

BREANNA

I am still ... a part of the energy of the all ... despite my shortcomings ... and I will touch goodness in my life and bring goodness to life around me.

CLAUDIA

I mean, I know, in real life, there's a happy medium. It's not that I don't know that that little girl wasn't ... as misguided as can possibly be ... but several times in the article they referred to her, the experts referred to her, as "disconnected". And that didn't seem right.

During the following, Breanna goes back to the night table and, from another drawer, takes out some powders and liquids. And what appears to be a kind of scrapbook. Almost with a sense of a weight having been lifted, her humor more good-natured than creepy, she mutters to herself:

BREANNA

"Are you a good witch or a bad witch?" Hee-hee-hee. "Oh, I'm a good witch." I am. IyamIyamIyam.

CLAUDIA

People call me a "soccer mom". *That* seems disconnected.

BREANNA

"Fur and feathers, scales and skin, Different without but the same within."

CLAUDIA

It's not a question of ... morality. I mean, it's obvious what she did was wrong.

BREANNA

Good thing I finished my homework.

CLAUDIA

But I think ... if I can see what that little girl did ... and still feel love for her ...

BREANNA

"Crone and sage, crone and sage, wisdom is a gift of age."

CLAUDIA

See in some way that she wasn't, you know, just evil ...

Breanna lays the powders, liquids, and scrapbook in front of her, then squeezes some blood from her arm and paints it onto her face."

BREANNA

Waste not, want not. Hey kids, join the recycling drive.

CLAUDIA

Because I *can* go there. In some way. In my mind. I may not like to. But there is a part of me ... that keeps coming back to it.

Throughout the following, Breanna mixes her blood with the powder and liquids, smears some on herself and on the scrapbook.

BREANNA

(chanting softly:)

"Lady weave your circle tight
Fill us with your holy light
Earth, air, fire, and water
Bind us to you."

CLAUDIA

Birth, you know, obstetrics, in the hospital, they try to make everything sterile.

BREANNA

"Oh Great Spirit,
Earth, Sun, Sky, and Sea,
You are inside and all around me."

CLAUDIA

And I was all for that. No crunchy granola clinic for me. I was into *clean*.

BREANNA

"Oh Holy Mother,
Earth, Moon and Sea ..."

CLAUDIA

But when I got there, you know, they try to prepare you, but you feel this pain, this pain of your body, stretching so far *beyond* ...

BREANNA

"You are inside and all around me."

CLAUDIA

I didn't even want them to mop me -- guaze and suction, away, away. The blood was warm and it bathed me as I screamed bloody murder.

BREANNA

"Air I am, Fire I am ..."

CLAUDIA

Screamed in the fourth hour, eighth hour, twelfth hour...

BREANNA

"Water, earth, and spirit I am..."

CLAUDIA

And only the human, the human head...

BREANNA

"Breeze I am, Sun I am ..."

CLAUDIA

Casing the brain, the bloated brain ..."

BREANNA

"Brook, Mountain, and Goddess I am ..."

CLAUDIA

Too big, too big for what we're built to be...

BREANNA

"Maiden I am ..."

CLAUDIA

Slice me open, that's what they wanted, to yank her out...

BREANNA

"Mother I am..."

CLAUDIA

But I screamed and pushed and shat and pissed and bled ...

BREANNA

"Sister, lover, crone I am."

Beat.

CLAUDIA

And then I heard a wail, the first wail of life and they lifted her, bathed in blood ...

BREANNA

(another chant, quickly, almost
whispering)

"Deep in my bone, the Goddess is alive,
Deep in my cells and blood, the life force is strong ..."

CLAUDIA

... the cord uncut ...

BREANNA

"Deep in my spirit I believe I will heal,
My blood, my cells, and my body are healing now ..."

CLAUDIA
... bathed in my blood ...

BREANNA
"Abundant Life Forces flow in me, filling me with faith ..."

CLAUDIA
... and I was in rapture.

BREANNA
"The Goddess force is in me and healing me now."

Silence. Breanna is smeared with blood and
powder.

CLAUDIA
I was in rapture.

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY