

RED SAVINA

original screenplay by

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OVER BLACK

DARBY (O.S.)
So you grew up wanting to be a
scientist, did you?

FADE IN:

A burning fire, dim figures around it.

MIRASOL
No. When I grew up, I wanted to be
a dragon.

The fire flares up, a bright orange fireball, to audible gasps,
followed by laughter.

EXT. UNDERWOOD MANSION - NIGHT

The laughing woman is MIRASOL DRAKE, a beautiful coyote in her
mid-20s: shoulder-length red hair, golden eyes, slacks rather
than a skirt. By her side stands HARRY JENKINS, a slim, rakish
fox a few years older than her.

DARBY UNDERWOOD stands across the fire from her; the fox is in
his 50s, big, fit, severe. GABRIELLE UNDERWOOD stands near but
apart from her husband, the perfect vixen hostess: stunning
black cocktail dress, emerald eyes framed by long blonde hair
pulled back in a ponytail. She's half a foot shorter and at
least fifteen years younger than Darby.

MIRASOL
But I'll settle for being a
mad scientist.

Harry claps delightedly. Darby offers a polite,
professional smile.

HARRY
Calcium chloride?

DARBY
A fine parlor trick, although I'm
told you have many other talents.
Speaking of parlors: Harry, let's
go chat about your proposal.

MIRASOL
Should I--

Darby steps away from the group toward the house.

HARRY

You don't have to. I'll let you know.

He gives Mirasol a discreet thumbs-up, then hurries after the older fox.

GABRIELLE

Harry seems rather taken with you.

MIRASOL

You sound surprised.

GABRIELLE

No. My nephew's always had an eye for beauty.

MIRASOL

You make me sound like a bauble. A pretty little thing to hang off his arm. Harry and I are business partners. He's a chemist, too, but he's better at...

GABRIELLE

Business?

MIRASOL

That, and this. Parties. Mingling. I'm not good at mingling.

GABRIELLE

Practice does make perfect.

MIRASOL

You're more like Harry, aren't you? I should have gone with him to that meeting. Whether or not he likes it.

GABRIELLE

Even though you're not good at business?

MIRASOL

Because I'm not good at it. God knows what he'll agree to just to get support from people like...

GABRIELLE

Like my husband? Or me?

MIRASOL

Not you two, specifically. I mean any economic royalist.

Gabrielle's smile grows distinctly stiff.

GABRIELLE

What a clever turn of phrase. If
you'll excuse me, Miss Drake.

The vixen heads toward the main house, grabbing a wine glass off a servant's tray as she does so. Mirasol sighs, crossing her arms as she watches Gabrielle leave.

As mansions go, the Underwood Estate is elegantly restrained, but unmistakably a mansion. It overlooks the richest houses in the metro area, the sparkling lights of downtown visible a couple miles away. Strings of electric lights dot the wide expanse of terrazzo between the fire pit and the house. Most dress like Harry and Gabrielle: there to be seen. A few, all older men, dress like Darby: there for business.

Gabrielle makes her way through huge sliding glass doors that open onto--

INT. UNDERWOOD MANSION

--the grand ballroom. The space is high, open, ornate in an art deco style. Tables stacked with *hors d'oeuvre* trays line the hall's sides. Under the din of conversation, a hidden radio plays tinny, jaunty music.

Gabrielle sweeps through like a movie star navigating a crowd of adoring fans--smiling, waving, acknowledging anyone and everyone.

OLDER MAN

Mrs. Underwood! Lovely as always!

GABRIELLE

Me or the party, dear?

YOUNGER WOMAN

Gabrielle! You'll be at the
benefit ball next month, won't
you?

GABRIELLE

You know I wouldn't miss it.

OLDER WOMAN

Oh I have to know who does
your fur!

GABRIELLE

Vixens never tell!

She seems fully in her element as she makes her way toward the other side of the room.

Mirasol steps through the same sliding glass doors, hesitant, skulking toward one of the side tables. She picks up one of the plainest appetizers she can find, gets a glass of water rather than wine, then stays put, studiously avoiding engaging with the crowd.

Not all of the crowd returns the favor; a handsome young tuxedoed mouse approaches.

HANDSOME MOUSE

Well! Good evening.

MIRASOL

I don't suppose you know where the parlor is, do you?

HANDSOME MOUSE

I--I think it's through the sitting room, down the hall? I'm not sure.

MIRASOL

Thanks. Hold this.

Mirasol hands him the glass of water. He looks confused now.

HANDSOME MOUSE

But--where are you--

MIRASOL

I have to practice my mingle.

Gabrielle, meanwhile, doesn't notice Mirasol or even break stride--until a well-dressed but clearly inebriated cat puts his hand on her shoulder, momentarily stopping her passage.

DRUNK CAT

Oh, thank you so much for the invitation.

She gently removes his hand from her shoulder and steps past.

GABRIELLE

So nice you could make it.

DRUNK CAT

I couldn't miss it! Your parties are--are--they're legendary!

GABRIELLE

Thank you.

DRUNK CAT

Legendary! This is all you live
for, isn't it? Nothing more than--

He sweeps both arms grandly around to indicate the
whole tableau.

DRUNK CAT

--nothing more than this!

Gabrielle's smile falters. She hurries on, disappearing through
an interior archway.

INT. PARLOR

Dark wood paneling, a painting of a military scene, a rifle
over the fireplace. Heavy wooden chairs that look more
expensive than comfortable surround a round table. Sitting
around it: Darby; Harry; TANEY, a badger; NEWCOMB, a stoat;
CHAPMAN, a raccoon. Taney wears a dress service uniform with
colonel's insignia. Newcomb has a blue blazer and matching
bowtie; Chapman's in a pinstripe suit.

Everyone's smoking (cigars for Darby and Taney, cigarettes for
the others). The table holds overflowing ashtrays, bottles of
wine, bottles of scotch. Harry looks nervous but animated.
Darby's leaning back in his chair, watching Harry with lidded
eyes.

HARRY

I tell you, it's solved. I've seen
it. I know you've, you've, gotten
reports on this...

NEWCOMB

I think you mean "cleaned up the
messes," Harry. I'm not saying
what you and your girl have
accomplished isn't unbelievably
impressive--

TANEY

Or just unbelievable.

NEWCOMB

--but if your control problem was
solved, my men wouldn't be dealing
with flipped police cars and
people blabbing hysterically about
a "giant monster."

HARRY

It's solved on paper.
(MORE)

HARRY (CONT'D)

In the flask, even. We just haven't run the live tests. But we're almost there!

CHAPMAN

"Almost" doesn't get financing.

DARBY

I'm still not following, Jenkins. Your grandfather's project failed because the subjects couldn't be controlled, and you say your radical little coyote doll's figured out what he couldn't. But you're also saying your subject can't be controlled.

HARRY

I'm saying that we didn't have it worked out until very recently. Until--until after the initial tests.

Colonel Taney stabs his lit cigar accusingly toward Harry, close enough to make the fox flinch backward.

TANEY

Why in blazes would you test this goddamn hocus pocus before that was worked out?

MIRASOL (O.S.)

Because the radical little coyote doll has a mind of her own.

All the men turn as the coyote walks toward the table. Harry's ears fold down. Darby grins--more of a leer.

INT. PANTRY

Gabrielle searches through bottles of wine in a wooden rack behind an open glass door, picking out each one, looking at the label, and putting it back. A matronly bespectacled squirrel hovers behind her, looking concerned. This is MRS. WATERS, her housekeeper.

MRS. WATERS

This is for the serving staff to do, ma'am.

GABRIELLE

It's an extremely rare wine. And you know how he gets.

MRS. WATERS

(frowning)

I do indeed. But you have a party to run! He can't just expect you to--

GABRIELLE

I suppose he expects me to prove parties aren't all I live for.

She pulls out a bottle, studies it, and straightens up, holding it, then purses her lips, barely hiding her anger as she continues.

GABRIELLE

I'm also expected to live for him.

Locking the wine cabinet, she sighs, and gives Mrs. Waters an affectionate, tired smile. The squirrel's frown deepens as the vixen walks away with the bottle, down a small labyrinth of hallways. She gives the parlor door a perfunctory knock before stepping in.

INT. PARLOR

Mirasol stands by Darby rather than sitting, ill at ease. Harry has a nervous, fixed grin. Darby's clearly the one having the most fun, king in his castle. He waves his wife over.

DARBY

Perfect timing! We're almost at a deal.

CHAPMAN

It's your money to burn, Underwood.

DARBY

And if you want any return, it'll be some of yours, too. Harry and Mira will remember who their friends are, won't they?

HARRY

Ah, quite so, Uncle. Quite so.

DARBY

Gabbi, Mira's going to need a place to stay, some kind of muck-up at the school with her housing. So we're offering her a spare room.

He hooks an arm around Mirasol's waist. The coyote grimaces. Harry clears his throat. Gabrielle goes still for a long moment before setting the wine bottle down in front of her husband.

GABRIELLE

How nice of us.

Darby leans forward, taking the wine and reaching for a corkscrew. Then he scowls.

DARBY

This is the wrong vintage! I said
1926, not 1928!

GABRIELLE

I'm sorry. But what difference--

He leaps up, grabbing her arm and twisting it hard as he yanks her forward, the kind of twist that can snap bones. She squeals involuntarily in pain.

DARBY

It's the wrong vintage, woman! How
dare you ask what goddamn
difference that makes!

Mirasol clenches her fists by her sides, and speaks in a polite but threateningly low tone.

MIRASOL

Mr. Underwood. Let go of her.

Gabrielle's breath comes in sharp, pained gasps. He gives the coyote a long, measured look. She doesn't flinch. Harry does, though. Taney chews on his cigar, expression flat; Newcomb smiles stiffly. Chapman looks irritated and uncomfortable.

CHAPMAN

You've made your point, Underwood.
We're fine with 1928. Let it go.

After another second Darby lets go, and goes about opening the bottle of wine as if nothing had happened, pouring it into waiting glasses. Gabrielle swallows, cradling her arm, and steps away. Mirasol steps after her.

MIRASOL

Are you--does he do that often?

Gabrielle shakes her head minutely, not meeting the coyote's eyes, and hurries off screen.

INT. LABORATORY

Harry and Mirasol are in the process of setting up a laboratory in what looks like a converted garden shed: rustic, lots of natural light, but now very clean.

HARRY

I don't like him much,
either, but--

MIRASOL

It's not a matter of "like." He's
a monster.

HARRY

Ironic from you, hmm? He's the
only one who promised to give us
seed money. Not to mention give
you a place to live, with
Stevenson University kicking you
out.

MIRASOL

You saw him! He was practically
trying to slide his paw down my
pants!

HARRY

Have you looked at you? Of course
he was.

Mirasol glares at him reproachfully.

HARRY

Just go talk to him, all right? I
don't think we left on the best
footing last night.

MIRASOL

You know he just wants to use this
to make weapons. And what's the
stoat want?

HARRY

The police commissioner?

Mirasol throws up her hands in exasperation.

HARRY

Look, I know their ends aren't our
ends. But they can be our means.

(MORE)

HARRY (CONT'D)

(beat)

You don't have to be Uncle Darby's best friend, but you can't be his enemy.

She sighs deeply, closing her eyes. He's winning the argument with her and she hates it.

EXT. UNDERWOOD MANSION/BALCONY - SUNSET

Darby and Gabrielle sit on the balcony, opposite ends of a table. A glass of white wine sits in front of her. He has a glass of scotch in hand and a mostly empty bottle in front of him, and looks as drunk as all that implies.

GABRIELLE

You didn't think I deserved any say in any of this?

DARBY

It's my house and my money.

GABRIELLE

It's our house.

Darby scowls and tops off his glass.

DARBY

I paid for it. I paid for everything in it. Hell, I pay for you.

GABRIELLE

(under her breath)

You make me sound like a bauble.

DARBY

What?

She shakes her head.

EXT. UNDERWOOD MANSION/FRONT DOOR

On the other side of the house, Mirasol knocks on the front door, waits, rings the doorbell, waits some more. Then her huge radar ears swivel: she's hearing the argument. She jogs around the house's side. Just after she leaves, Mrs. Waters opens the door, looks for whoever knocked, and frowns.

EXT. UNDERWOOD MANSION/BALCONY

DARBY

You think I'm just inviting her here so I can fuck her, don't you?

GABRIELLE

I didn't say that.

DARBY

You don't have to. It wouldn't be the first time, hmm?

The vixen may be on a slow boil, but she's reaching the tipping point.

GABRIELLE

It would be the first time under our roof.

DARBY

You're so sure of that, are you?

She stares at him. He smirks, shrugging.

Mirasol rounds the side of the house. She can see them now. Gabrielle stands up abruptly.

GABRIELLE

I've had enough of this. Of you. Day after day, year after year.

DARBY

Sit down, Gabbi.

GABRIELLE

You can talk to my lawyer.

Darby stands up, roaring:

DARBY

Sit down!

Gabrielle quivers, then steels her jaw, spinning on a heel and heading back inside. She only gets a few steps before he's on her.

Mirasol had been about to call, but now she's looking up, gaping. Her view of the balcony, nearly two stories overhead, isn't good, but she can hear Gabrielle's scream, see Darby lifting the vixen up by her neck. He's choking her.

The coyote breaks into a run, starting to yell. But she stumbles, doubles over, falls to all fours. Her yell becomes an anguished choke, then deepens into a growl.

Back on the balcony--

DARBY

I give you everything you want,
you spoiled bitch! You wouldn't
last a day without me!

His hands are around the vixen's throat, and he's lifted her off the floor, backing her toward the house. She's flailing frantically, clearly unable to breathe.

Something rises behind them. Something big. Gabrielle can see it, but Darby can't.

DARBY

If you ever breathe the word
"divorce" to me, I'll--

The growl behind him shakes the whole balcony, the bottles on the table clattering, Gabrielle's wine glass falling and shattering. He drops Gabrielle, spins, stares up at...

RED SAVINA. A monster, bipedal, tall enough the balcony just meets her hips. A dragon woman? A canine giantess? Both: a coyote's coloration and muzzle shape (and tall ears, although there's a touch of serpent to the look), a curvy mammalian build, but a draconic tail, scutes along her front, swirling golden eyes. Beautiful, but terrifying.

Gabrielle crumples, staring up dumbly, gasping for breath. Darby makes a mad dash inside, abandoning his wife.

Red Savina's fist *smashes* into the house, on the sliding glass door...on Darby. He doesn't even get a full scream out.

Gabrielle manages a weak, hoarse yelp, trying to scramble back on the damaged balcony. Lifting her fist, Red Savina leans forward, golden eyes focused on the vixen.

GABRIELLE

No--please--

The dragon-woman reaches toward her with one talon out. Gabrielle faints, the scene fading with her consciousness.

EXT/INT. UNDERWOOD MANSION - NIGHT

Uniformed policemen, various species, swarm the remains of the balcony and the ruined room immediately behind it. One stands by Darby's body, grimacing, while a photographer takes pictures of the scene with a huge flash bulb camera.

Another policeman sits with Gabrielle. The vixen looks bedraggled, numb. In the background we see an officer questioning Mrs. Waters as well.

OFFICER

You didn't see anyone around before the collapse? No workmen, maybe?

GABRIELLE

Other than the monster? No.

The officer sighs, scribbling in his notebook. Irritated, Gabrielle waves a hand around the room.

GABRIELLE

I know how it sounds. But this-- how do you explain it away?

OFFICER

The investigation's just starting, ma'am. But buildings crumble. Freak accidents happen. You got a shock, maybe a concussion--

Gabrielle maintains a patient, tired tone.

GABRIELLE

I don't have a concussion.

OFFICER

Were you drinking?

GABRIELLE

One glass of wine.

OFFICER

Were you two arguing?

GABRIELLE

Yes. Darby has...a temper.

(beat)

You don't think I--

The officer stands up with a resigned look.

OFFICER

I'm just asking, ma'am. It's understandable you're hysterical.

GABRIELLE

I'm hardly--

OFFICER

If there'd been some kind of giant dragon wolf thing, your neighbors would have seen it, ma'am. Your maid would have seen it.

MRS. WATERS

I'm the housekeeper, sir, not the maid.

Both officers look at one another.

OFFICER

Get some rest, Mrs. Underwood. We'll be back tomorrow. In the meantime, please don't touch anything; the investigation isn't closed yet.

Mrs. Waters sits down by Gabrielle, and they wait in silence as the officers leave the scene.

GABRIELLE

You don't think they believe I killed him, do you?

MRS. WATERS

Police are suspicious sorts, ma'am. But you're...you. You're friends with Commissioner Newcomb!

GABRIELLE

Darby is. Was.

(beat)

So you didn't see the "giant dragon wolf thing."

MRS. WATERS

I'm afraid not, ma'am. But...

(beat)

This...may be an odd question. But are you sure she wasn't a dragon-coyote?

Gabrielle's eyes widen, her gaze snapping to the squirrel.

EXT. HARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The back yard of a well-to-do home: not a mansion, but by no means small and cheap. The yard is huge; the house is dim, in the distance. In the foreground is the edge of a garden shed: the laboratory we saw Harry and Mirasol working on earlier.

With a solid, ground-shaking thump, Red Savina lands between the two buildings, folding her wings and dropping to all fours. As she lands, a light goes on in the house, then by the back door. Harry rushes out, then just stares, ears folding back.

HARRY

You can't be that--big--

Savina focuses her swirling eyes on him, and gives a sharp, urgent command in a voice that's still feminine but resonates through a listener's bones.

RED SAVINA

Antidote.

Harry opens his muzzle, but decides not to question. He races past her for the shed, scrambling in. Rummaging noises come from inside; a few moments later he returns, carrying three big glass jars in his arms. He awkwardly starts to open one.

HARRY

This is all we've made, I
don't know--

Savina's tongue shoots out of her mouth, canine in form but serpentine in length--and prehensile. It pulls the whole bottle out of his hand and takes it into her mouth. She grabs the other two bottles together in the same fashion, then tilts her head back and swallows them whole, visibly and audibly. She shudders, back arching, front talons digging into the ground--then shifts, rapidly shrinking, wings folding into her back and sinking into her fur, scutes shifting back to furriness, tail returning to normal.

In short order, Mirasol lies on her side in the grass, panting, naked. Harry hurries toward her, throwing his coat around her and guiding her back to the house.

INT. HARRY'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM

A large, under-furnished living room: big, bright, modern by 1930s-era standards, garish abstract paintings on the walls, *objet d'art* littering end tables and austere metal shelves. It seems less like a real home than a model room thrown together by a rich but tasteless real estate agent. Harry guides the coyote to the couch as he talks.

MIRASOL

You have my nerve tonic here,
don't you, Harry? Please say you
do.

He hurries to the kitchen.

HARRY

Yes. Yes. I'll get some. Calm down and tell me what happened. You were supposed to be going to the Underwoods--dear Lord, you didn't take formula to show--

MIRASOL

No! I changed without it, Harry! I changed spontaneously. Stress, panic, I don't know...

Harry returns with a blue glass bottle and a spoon. Mirasol ignores the spoon and takes a swig straight from the bottle, grimacing, then takes a deep breath.

HARRY

You panicked and not only transformed without the potion, you became four times bigger?

MIRASOL

I heard the Underwoods arguing. I raced around the building, and saw Mr. Underwood...lifting his wife up by the throat, choking her. I felt myself blacking out, and then she...Savina took over.

HARRY

What happened?

Mirasol whimpers, closing her eyes.

HARRY

Mira!

MIRASOL

She killed him. I... killed...

HARRY

Oh my God.

She starts to cry, her voice barely a ragged whisper.

MIRASOL

He was choking her, you understand? He was going to kill Gabrielle.

HARRY

This damned going off the rails is exactly why we need the control serum you're supposed to be developing, rather than encouraging this--this chaos beast!

Mirasol's voice rises in frustration.

MIRASOL

That control serum was for someone else to have control of the subject; we want the subject to have control of herself.

HARRY

Well, the subject doesn't goddamn have that yet, does she? We must, must, get that solved. We can't have you change spontaneously again.

Mirasol looks like she wants to keep arguing for a moment. Then she deflates, nodding meekly.

HARRY

Good girl. Now I'm going to see if I can talk to Commissioner Newcomb without getting arrested.

He gives her a perfunctory hug, then hurries out. Mirasol leans forward, holding her head in her hands.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

It's a beautiful, bright day, a vivid contrast to a somber crowd of mourners slowly dispersing. A wolf in Catholic priest vestments chats with an elderly mouse to the side of the frame. Gabrielle, wearing black, stands gazing down at a new grave, twisting the end of her long ponytail in her fingers. Harry's standing near the vixen, looking awkward.

HARRY

Just... ah... we'll talk again later, Aunt Gabrielle.

He clasps her hand; she doesn't look at him, even as he leaves. The mouse who'd been talking with the priest approaches. He's portly, bearded, wearing a vest, the sort you immediately know smokes pipes and hangs out in libraries. This is HOWARD LEIGHTON, a professor and an acquaintance of the family. He puts a hand on her shoulder.

LEIGHTON

I'm sorry again for your
loss, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

Thank you, Howard.

LEIGHTON

I don't mean to pry, but I
couldn't help overhear your
nephew...

(harrumphs)

Is there anything I can do?

She smiles wanly.

GABRIELLE

For me, or about Harry? I don't
think he intends to be rude. Darby
had promised him and his--
partner--a lifeline. He didn't
come right out and say it, but he
wants me to keep my husband's
deal.

LEIGHTON

Good intentions only go so far. It
may not be my place, but... is he
trying to resurrect his
grandfather's research? I know a
few years back, it was his
obsession. I thought he'd given
up, but...

Gabrielle furrows her brow, then shakes her head, looking lost.

GABRIELLE

His grandfather Henry? I can't
say. All I've ever heard is that
he was an eccentric chemist. The
family never talked much about
him.

LEIGHTON

I don't doubt that.

(sighs)

Now isn't the time. But before
Harry talks you into anything,
please come by my office and talk.

He squeezes her shoulder, and heads off. She looks back down at
Darby's headstone.

INT. UNDERWOOD MANSION/SITTING ROOM - DAY

A tastefully-appointed, less formal sitting room with a feminine touch. A few chairs, a sofa, a small table for two by a window.

Gabrielle's on the sofa. She still wears black, although it's less funereal now. Harry's with her. In the background, Mrs. Waters does some light dusting, clearly listening disapprovingly.

HARRY

I know it's a lot to ask, Aunt Gabbi, and I don't mean to be putting the screws to you over it, especially now. But she simply doesn't have anywhere else to go for the moment. Losing her housing at the U was...abrupt.

GABRIELLE

But you surely have space at your home.

HARRY

It's not that big a house. For this neighborhood it's positively tiny. But even if I could clear out a spare room, well... Young man, attractive young unrelated woman moving in, people talk. You and I might be modern, but the people I'm trying to get investment money from aren't.

GABRIELLE

You were trying to get investment money from Darby.

HARRY

That rather proves my point. He promised what they call "seed money," just to get the project past the proof of concept stage.

GABRIELLE

And I suspect you want me to give you that as well. Harry, you're a man of some means. Can't you "seed" this yourself? Can't you pay to put Miss Drake up in a boarding house?

Harry's ears flag. He grimaces, looking more agitated.

HARRY

If I had that money, I'd--
(deep breath)
The truth is my income stream is rather thin these days. I'm still "consulting" with Stevenson U, but it's more honorary than meaningful.

GABRIELLE

Ah.

HARRY

Even if I was on better terms with my immediate family, their fortunes aren't what they once were. I've put all the free cash I have into setting up a little private laboratory space now that we're not going to have access to the university. The truth is I'm tapped out.

GABRIELLE

No access to... is she being kicked out of the school entirely?

He looks away, fidgeting.

HARRY

Radicals aren't popular on campus right now. But Mira's a brilliant chemist. She might be better than I am.

GABRIELLE

You haven't touched a beaker since you've been out of school yourself.

HARRY

That's not true. I have my hand in this project even now.

(beat)

I know you and Mira may not see eye-to-eye on much. And I know you're not obligated to honor Darby's verbal promises. But I think you could use the company, Aunt Gabbi, in such a trying time.

She sighs, looking up at the ceiling.

GABRIELLE

If I say yes, it's on the condition this is temporary. I expect her to be looking for a room of her own as soon as possible. And if you have to help her, so be it.

Harry perks up, ears lifting, and he claps his hands with a grin. Mrs. Waters shakes her head in the background.

HARRY

Thank you! You won't regret it, I promise. I'll let her know.

INT. UNDERWOOD MANSION/UPPER LEVEL - DAY

The room Darby had been killed in has been cleaned of debris, but it's still open to the elements, furniture covered with canvas tarps. Gabrielle stands close enough that the wind ruffles her blonde hair, still pulled back in its ponytail by a clasp. She watches workers measuring holes, building scaffolding outside. Mirasol approaches her from behind, eyes wide. The vixen doesn't turn around.

GABRIELLE

The police won't let them start work yet. The foreman asked what really happened, because it surely wasn't what the police report said.

MIRASOL

What did you tell him?

Gabrielle turns away and walks back into the house down the stairs, still not looking at the coyote directly.

GABRIELLE

I told him it was a giant monster. He laughed.

Mirasol follows a few steps behind, ears back.

INT. UNDERWOOD MANSION/SITTING ROOM

GABRIELLE

When will the rest of your belongings arrive?

MIRASOL

They're all here.

Gabrielle finally turns to look at her, surprised.

GABRIELLE
Just a small trunk and a
single suitcase?

MIRASOL
And a backpack.

GABRIELLE
Oh.

The vixen sits down on a sofa, and presses a button on the wall behind the end table. Mirasol sits down in a nearby chair, giving the button a puzzled glance.

MIRASOL
What did that--

Mrs. Waters approaches from the hallway, bushy tail twitching.

MRS. WATERS
Wine, ma'am?

GABRIELLE
Yes. Wait. No. I think this is a
gin and tonic day.

MRS. WATERS
Yes, ma'am.

She turns toward the coyote.

MRS. WATERS
Anything for you, miss?

MIRASOL
I... don't...

GABRIELLE
You don't drink?

MIRASOL
Yes, I drink. Usually beer, but
what I meant was--

MRS. WATERS
I'll get you a lager, miss.

The squirrel disappears, leaving Mirasol looking uncomfortable and Gabrielle looking mildly confused.

MIRASOL
I'm not used to... servants. How
many do you have?

GABRIELLE

We--I--employ a cook and a maid
and a gardener. Mrs. Waters is the
only one who lives at the house.

MIRASOL

There were so many at your party.
She's not the maid?

GABRIELLE

Mrs. Waters is the housekeeper.
The party help is temporary. This
isn't a palace.

MIRASOL

It's close enough. No butler?

Mrs. Waters returns with both glasses, handing a tumbler to
Gabrielle and a pint glass to Mirasol as she speaks.

MRS. WATERS

Mr. Underwood had a personal valet
who lived here, too, miss, but he
quit some months ago.

MIRASOL

Oh. Um, thank you, Mrs. Waters.

She takes the glass and Mrs. Waters leaves. They fall into
awkward silence a few beats, Gabrielle looking into the
distance. Then she speaks abruptly:

GABRIELLE

Do you think I killed him?

MIRASOL

No.

(beat)

What have the police said?

GABRIELLE

They say it's most likely a fluke,
a "structural flaw" in the house.
But they haven't released the
scene yet. The more I insist on
the truth of what I saw, the more
suspicious they seem.

MIRASOL

You might have--if you suffered a
concussion...

GABRIELLE

I might have imagined a giant monster? One that just happened to match a tale going around the shantytowns, of a beautiful, terrifying dragon-coyote woman they call "Red Savina."

Mirasol visibly jumps. Gabrielle narrows her eyes.

MIRASOL

You don't spend time in "shantytowns," do you? People who do don't call them that.

GABRIELLE

It was Mrs. Waters' word. But you know that name. Red Savina.

MIRASOL

I have. I've...been in shantytowns.

GABRIELLE

Do you think she exists?

MIRASOL

I don't think the police can find proof you killed your husband, because I don't think you did, Mrs. Underwood. And they wouldn't frame someone like you.

GABRIELLE

An economic royalist?

MIRASOL

Exactly.

Gabrielle takes a long sip of the gin and tonic, then looks down at the floor.

GABRIELLE

They know I might have a reason to, though. You know it, too.

(beat)

I have to prove what truly happened. And I have no idea how.

Mirasol shifts uncomfortably. They both lapse back into silence.

INT. UNDERWOOD MANSION/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Gabrielle and Mirasol sit at opposite ends of a dining room table that could easily fit eight. Each has a bowl of bisque and a plate of perfectly composed Cobb salad in front of them, served on real china with real silverware. The vixen eats as she reads a magazine; the coyote studies her food bemusedly, poking the various bits of salad with her fork rather than mixing them. Finally Gabrielle looks up and lifts a brow.

MIRASOL

Do you eat like this every night?

The vixen lowers the magazine.

GABRIELLE

Soup and salad?

MIRASOL

Lobster bisque and the fanciest salad I've ever seen on the fanciest plates I've ever seen outside a restaurant. Maybe counting them, too.

GABRIELLE

Do you like it?

MIRASOL

Yes. It's just, just...I can't help but think of how much else could be done with the money you're spending on forks alone.

Gabrielle looks at her own fork, frowns, then sets it down and sighs, folding her arms and looking across the table.

GABRIELLE

Are you planning to work in a bit of socialist resentment every time we speak?

MIRASOL

I don't know. Do you work in a bit of capitalist excess in everything you do?

Gabrielle rather pointedly goes back to her soup.

GABRIELLE

Apparently so. How is it you met my nephew again?

MIRASOL

We met at the university. He's a consultant there, and he learned about experiments I was doing that were--well--

(clears throat)

I'd been working on... heterodox chemistry. And it reminded him of work his grandfather had been doing.

GABRIELLE

He's a "consultant" because his father gave Stevenson U. a huge donation. But his grandfather? What kind of work?

MIRASOL

Failed military research. There's not much I can--should--say about it, other than I'm glad it failed. It would have fantastically increased state power.

GABRIELLE

And your work is related?

MIRASOL

No. Well, not to the same end. I'd like to see that force disrupt the state rather than support it.

The vixen can't help but give the coyote an incredulous stare, then stifles a laugh.

GABRIELLE

Harry is helping you "disrupt the state?"

Mirasol's ears go flat, and she gets up from the table.

MIRASOL

I wouldn't expect you to understand.

GABRIELLE

I didn't mean to be rude, Miss Drake. But that's just...not the nephew I know.

MIRASOL

Maybe you don't know him, then.

The coyote stalks off. Gabrielle leans back, sighing, then looks thoughtful, drumming her fingers on the magazine.

INT. HARRY'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gabrielle stands in Harry's living room with her arms crossed. Harry's stepping away from a wet bar by the kitchen, a martini glass in each hand.

HARRY

Taking advantage of her? Really, Aunt Gabbi, that's unkind.

GABRIELLE

She's young and naive.

Harry smirks, holding out one glass to the vixen. She takes it, but still gives him a reproachful look as she sits down.

HARRY

She's passionate. About science, about politics, about--life.

GABRIELLE

She's been kicked out of the university entirely, hasn't she?

HARRY

There's been a--a bump. I'm sure it'll be worked out.

GABRIELLE

Academic records are "bumps" someone in your position has the power to smooth over. You had bumps yourself, as I recall.

HARRY

Things aren't that simple. It's not her grades.

Gabrielle purses her lips, swirling the martini as if it were wine before taking another sip.

GABRIELLE

Is it her politics? Your "project?" Both?

He holds up a hand.

HARRY

I can't talk much about our work yet.

(MORE)

HARRY (CONT'D)

And I know you're about to point out how much you're helping with it even now, and of course you're right, but there's a lot to work out with it, a lot of interests to balance.

GABRIELLE

I know very well who you and Darby were sitting with when you worked out the deal I'm holding to, so I know whose interests you're balancing. How can she possibly think that group is interested in "disrupting" the state?

Harry sighs, then downs a big swig of the martini before sitting down by her.

HARRY

You have been talking with her, haven't you? All right. Look. Mira is a brilliant chemist, but even if it wasn't a man's profession, her attitude's going to keep her out of a career. Maybe she'll get all this anarchy out of her system and settle down in a few years. But in the meantime I've set her on an old problem and she's making tremendous progress.

GABRIELLE

An old problem of your grandfather's?

Harry's ears splay, and his eyes narrow.

HARRY

What did she tell you?

GABRIELLE

Howard mentioned that, not Miss Drake.

HARRY

Howard--Professor Leighton? That old mouse should be less of a busybody. What I'm trying to do is restore old Henry's good name.

GABRIELLE

By having Miss Drake find a solution to whatever problem he'd been working on and selling it to...the military? The police?

HARRY

And that's why you think I'm taking advantage of her?

GABRIELLE

You know her politics. I'm sure she wants to donate this work to... to unions or communist rebellions. The point is, not selling it to the army.

Harry snorts and laughs.

HARRY

And you think I'd let her? Honestly, Aunt Gabbi, left to her own devices she'd keep it for herself. As melodramatic as it sounds, we'll all be far better off with it in more responsible paws.

A phone rings somewhere off camera. Harry stands up, heading toward it.

HARRY

Saved by the bell.

He picks up the phone.

HARRY

Hello, this is Harry.

(beat)

Yes, she is. She--

(beat)

What? Now?

Harry looks over at Gabrielle.

HARRY

It's your housekeeper. She says the police are there, quote, "ransacking the place."

Gabrielle's eyes widen. She hurries to her feet, setting down her drink.

GABRIELLE

Tell her I'm on my way. Thank you
for the drink, Harry.

HARRY

She's heading back now,
Mrs. Waters.

As Gabrielle rushes out, Harry hangs up, then puts his hands on his hips, looking dour.

HARRY

What in blazes are they looking
for at Gabbi's? Newcomb knows damn
well it's...

Ears lowering, he hurries out toward the back.

INT. LABORATORY

As Harry enters, we see the lab's now fully set up with equipment, multiple wooden lab tables, two old wooden desks--one almost empty, one stacked with papers. Harry strides in, then slows down, examining several oak barrels along one wall and frowning.

HARRY

Antidote. Just how big is she
worried she's going to get next
time? Or how big does she plan to
get?

He heads to the cluttered desk and rifles through the papers on top, pulling out a lab notebook, then starts flipping through it, page after page of neat script--presumably Mirasol's--and dense formulas.

HARRY

What have you changed, girl? This
is less chemistry than it is
damned alchemy!

After flipping another few seconds, he sighs, setting the book back down, looking defeated. Then he frowns, starting to rifle through loose pages on the desk. When he comes to a page with even denser scribbling on it, he narrows his eyes, lifting it up.

HARRY

You've solved it, you little
bitch, haven't you?

(MORE)

HARRY (CONT'D)

You're waiting until you can figure out how to integrate the control serum with your goddamn monster juice.

He sets that page down on the lab table, then goes to the other desk--his--and pulls out his own lab notebook. He starts copying Mirasol's notes, muttering as he writes.

HARRY

You may not be interested in making this formula, but I'm going to save you from yourself whether you like it or not. Not to mention save myself.

INT. UNDERWOOD MANSION/FOYER - DAY

As banging and thumping comes from the second floor, out of sight, Mrs. Waters opens the door for Gabrielle. The vixen hurries in toward the grand staircase to be stopped by a uniformed police officer, a grumpy-looking boar. Mirasol stands off to the side, arms crossed, looking like she wants to strangle someone.

OFFICER BOAR

You can't go up there.

A loud crash that sounds like something breaking comes from upstairs. Gabrielle looks horrified.

GABRIELLE

It's my house! You can't just--

OFFICER BOAR

We have a warrant.

GABRIELLE

To search for what? On what grounds?

(beat)

Mrs. Waters, call Commissioner Newcomb. We'll get--

She tries to go upstairs, and the boar keeps blocking her.

OFFICER BOAR

He's already here, lady. He's upstairs. You can ask him yourself when he gets down here.

MRS. WATERS

They said they're searching for evidence relating to the roof collapse that killed Mr. Underwood, ma'am.

OFFICER BOAR

If you didn't do anything, you don't have anything to worry about, right?

Another crash sounds from upstairs. Gabrielle visibly flinches.

MIRASOL

I've seen these cops around before, in other parts of town. They're thugs.

OFFICER BOAR

Watch your mouth, trash dog.

Mirasol bares her teeth. The cop locks eyes with her, resting a hand on his gun.

NEWCOMB

Let's not take the bait, Officer Kolba.

The commissioner comes down the staircase, followed by another cop, a burly bear, carrying a small box--presumably gathered evidence. The stoat looks like he did at the party: dark blue suit, loud tie, smarmy smile. Now he's got a badge pinned to the jacket.

NEWCOMB

I'm sorry if my men got a little enthusiastic in the search, Mrs. Underwood. They do enjoy their job.

(beat)

And Miss Drake. So nice to see you. I'd heard you moved in. Don't worry, we don't have a warrant that covers your room yet.

GABRIELLE

What the hell is this about, Francis? Your investigators had all but concluded Darby's death was an accident.

NEWCOMB

Yet you were very insistent it wasn't, so we kept looking.

(MORE)

NEWCOMB (CONT'D)

And some of my people say it doesn't look like a normal collapse. The stress lines are wrong.

She waves angrily upstairs.

GABRIELLE

So you're looking in my office for a bomb-making manual? A cannon in my bedroom closet?

NEWCOMB

We're looking for evidence of, you know, hiring someone to do something unusual. Or evidence of the state of your relationship with Darby. It didn't look like you two were getting on that well.

MIRASOL

Goddammit, you know she didn't do anything to that man!

Newcomb turns toward the coyote, folding his hands in front of him.

NEWCOMB

And how do I know that, Miss Drake? Is there some information relevant to this case you'd like to share with us?

MIRASOL

I-I-It's just... I know her. You know her.

NEWCOMB

You barely know her, and she barely knows you. I've been on the force for over two decades, and I've seen good people... snap.

Gabrielle's voice is tight, uncharacteristically hard.

GABRIELLE

And what "evidence" did you find?

NEWCOMB

Maybe small things. Maybe not. We'll see.

He motions, and the officers both head out of the house. He starts to follow, then turns around, as if just remembering something.

NEWCOMB

How's that research coming, Miss Drake? I'm gathering you've gotten unexpectedly big results, but might be lacking, what's the phrase, adequate controls.

She glares at him, without answering. He turns his bland smile on Gabrielle.

NEWCOMB

Harry tells me you're providing the seed money your husband had promised. That's good. This is important work.

(beat)

If I were you, I'd keep doing that. Have a nice day, Gabrielle.

As he leaves, Mrs. Waters starts to head toward the door, but Mirasol gets there faster, slamming it shut behind him.

MRS. WATERS

I wouldn't trust that man one bit. Meaning no disrespect, ma'am.

GABRIELLE

No. I don't think I would, either, Mrs. Waters.

The vixen looks at the staircase, takes a deep breath, then starts up. She pauses at the halfway point.

GABRIELLE

Miss Drake, for now I won't ask more about your research. But you might wish to ask some hard questions about who your friends are.

Mirasol closes her eyes, nodding fractionally. Gabrielle continues up.