

*INVISIBLE JOE*

*by*

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# ***INVISIBLE JOE***

## **CHARACTERS:**

*Captain Edith Warren – Psychiatrist in the US Army [in uniform]*

*Second Lieutenant Rose Smith – Her Patient [in uniform]*

*Natasha – Ex-lover of Captain Warren, a para-psychologist [Civilian dress]*

*Edith's Mother.*

*TWO CHAIRS flank a small TABLE with a pitcher of water and glasses.*

## **AT RISE:**

*EDITH at the table.*

EDITH

It was sudden. Like a stroke. The realization of how – ordinary I am. I realized it that night – The night he first appeared – He made me feel – like *I* didn't matter. Only through him do I exist– It was– It is maddening–

*[Pause]*

I fight it, this– this attack of the unremarkable self. I'm a psychiatrist. I'm a soldier, for Christ's sake. I fought– I killed– I cannot, I will not– My life, my very existence, calls for me to be extraordinary. My job depends on it. My job demands it. Only the bourgeoisie have ghosts.

## ***SCENE I***

*Natasha ENTERS to answer a phone.*

NATASHA

Parapsychology Department. With whom do you wish to speak?

EDITH

I wish to speak with you--

*[Silence]*

Hello? Hello?

NATASHA

Parapsychology Department. With whom do you wish to speak?

EDITH

I said I wish to speak with you.

NATASHA

Hello? Who is this?

EDITH

It's me.

NATASHA

I'm sorry– I don't– Who is this?

EDITH

You're killing me –

NATASHA

That makes two of us! I mean– You know what I mean.

EDITH

Yes, I do.

NATASHA

Three years. Three goddam years.

EDITH

I know. I'm sorry. I'm truly sorry. Life got the best of me--

[*Pause*]

Well. Now that we got that over with. How are you?

NATASHA

Now that we got that over with, I am—well.

EDITH

Glad to hear--

NATASHA

Are you really?

[*Pause*]

I'm sorry. Truth? No, I am not – well.

[*Pause*]

Never mind, yes, I am – well. And you?

EDITH

Fine. I'm fine. Are you still with--?

NATASHA

No. That died with last year's flowers. How do you know about Linda?

EDITH

I have my sources.

NATASHA

I *don't* have 'sources.' Have you met your happily-ever-after?

EDITH

I thought I had.

NATASHA

You're the one who– Never mind. [*very long silence*] Well, it was thrilling catching up with you. But I must dash–

EDITH

Okay. Stop. Stop.

[*silence*]

You there?

NATASHA

Yes –

EDITH

You're sore.

NATASHA

Are you surprised?

EDITH

Fair enough.

NATASHA

How did you expect me to behave?

EDITH

I expect some civility.

NATASHA

You could be calling from beyond the grave for all I know. A fucking ghost.

EDITH

I'm alive. I assure you.

NATASHA

I'm alive, too—

EDITH

I'm glad.

[*Pause*]

NATASHA

So *where* have you been? We agreed to stay in touch.

EDITH

I know. And by the way. You have a phone, as well.

NATASHA

My phone is afraid of your phone. It bites. Oh my god I'm being too nice to you. You completely disappeared. Where have you been? What have you been doing? And why – all of a sudden – after three years – are you calling me?

EDITH  
Oh—I—it seems—

NATASHA  
What is it?

EDITH  
I think I may be haunted.

## *SCENE II*

*Edith in mirror, primping. Her MOTHER appears behind her.*

MOTHER  
You're weak. And vulnerable – And she knows it – This business of being haunted. It's all in your imagination. She's going to use it to try to get you back.

SHE  
I am not weak.

MOTHER  
Yes, you are.

SHE  
I'm weak.

MOTHER  
Are those laugh-lines?

EDITH  
You're the expert on what *not* to say.

MOTHER  
Those *are* laugh-lines.

EDITH  
Case in point.

MOTHER  
Odd, you having laugh-lines.

EDITH  
What's so odd?

MOTHER  
You never laugh. So serious.

EDITH  
You didn't give me much to laugh at.

MOTHER

Boo hoo, Mommy held back her love. I'll bet that was a hot topic in Shrink school.

EDITH

It wasn't Shrink school – You make it sound – You make nine years and three degrees sound like – Like I attended a Beauty Academy.

MOTHER

You would have made a splendid cosmetician.

EDITH

To touch the invisible. It's why I became – why I went to 'Shrink' school. You never got that.

MOTHER

You want to touch the invisible? Laugh once and a while. Give that laugh-line a reason for being there.

EDITH

Okay. You need to go.

MOTHER

*[checks herself out in mirror]*

Look. I'm an endomorph. We're both endomorphs. Does that bother you, Doctor Pear?

EDITH

Never had any idea what I do –

MOTHER

You unscrew people's heads And pour bleach on their brains. Yes?

*[Pause]*

EDITH

Yes.

### ***SCENE III***

*Edith joins Natasha. Natasha holds two glasses of wine; she hands one to Edith.*

NATASHA

So you've finally come around. You actually believe in ghosts now?

EDITH

I don't-- I don't know-- Define 'ghost'.

NATASHA

Current outlaw references define a ghost as someone who disappears from one's Social Media feed.

EDITH

Stop.

NATASHA

Someone who, for whatever reason, drops out of your life one day.

EDITH

Enough. I won't listen to this.

*Natasha turns to the audience.*

NATASHA

Most cross-cultural references define a ghost as a visual representation of the dead. There is, to date, no concrete scientific evidence supporting the existence of ghosts, spirits, apparitions, specters, phantoms, poltergeists, incubi, succubae, demons, daemons, banshees, et al. Oh, there exist photos, most likely altered in photo-shop, and video and digital recordings – not to mention infrared television shows where TeeVee people lock themselves overnight in dank basements, and run around, screaming, “Something just ran by me.” All dubious, at best. For in that misinformed and anxious debris field of drivel and dreck, there is nothing that looks you in the face and says, ‘Oh, yeah, I’m a ghost.’ But wait. Science has prevailed. I believe that in our quest to know of ghosts and spirits, we have neglected the very science invented to help us cogitate the spirit world. The science of the mind: Psychology and the Paranormal.

*Natasha returns to Edith.*

EDITH

I remember your lectures.

NATASHA

Is that all you remember?

EDITH

Be fair.

NATASHA

Okay. Tell me about your ghost.

EDITH

It began with a patient. Second Lieutenant Rose Smith. A Psych-Eval referral from Sheila. She was belligerent at first –

NATASHA

Aren't they always?

EDITH

They walk through my door seeking help, and the moment they sit, they're cured. And I become an obsolete annoyance.

#### **SCENE IV**

*Edith joins Rose at the table and chairs.*

ROSE

All due respect, I don't need therapy, Ma'am.

EDITH

This is not therapy. It's a Psych-Eval to determine your fitness for duty.

ROSE

Like I said, I don't need—

EDITH

That determination is not up to you.

[*looks in her file*]

You were seeing Major Sheila Quirke over at Langley. I know her. For some reason she abruptly ended your sessions and referred you to me.

ROSE

Quirke is an asshole. Ma'am.

EDITH

I'm sure she is. Nevertheless, she is your superior officer. As am I. Some respect is required. Which reminds...no need for 'Ma'am' or 'Sir.' Here we like to keep the atmosphere informal.

ROSE

We?

EDITH

You and me.

ROSE

Copy that, Ma'am.

EDITH

[*reading file*]

You were last deployed--

ROSE

In Afghanistan. I was there up until about two weeks before we withdrew.

EDITH

Your third deployment—

ROSE

Yes. First was *Kabul*. Second *Helmand* at the Regional Command Southwest. Third *Kunduz*. Due north.

EDITH

You're with the 3<sup>rd</sup>?

ROSE



Yes, Ma'am. 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, Regimental Combat Team III, 77<sup>th</sup> Airborne.

EDITH

I've come across quite a few from your regiment.

ROSE

I'll bet I can guess the biggest problem we all face when we got back.

EDITH

If you were to guess P.T.S.D. Re-integrating with—

ROSE

No, Ma'am. Chipped teeth. Spent most of our time over there clenching our jaws.

EDITH

Says something that the camp dentist is busier than the camp psychologist. Okay—

*[looks in file]*

Medals. Citations. Commendations. Impressive. Scant personal details. We'll pick them up as we go along. For the most part, Doctor Sheila writes, you are mentally fit. However "Subject has experienced the occasional phantasmagorical hallucination."

ROSE

"Phantasmagorical?" That's a college word.

EDITH

Don't let it frighten you.

ROSE

Too late. Unfrighten it for me.

EDITH

A phantasmagoria is a sequence of imaginary images akin to those experienced in dreams. What makes them phantasmagorical is that even though they appear to be real, they are not. They are phantom images. So, let's start there. Tell me about these hallucinations--

*[Pause]*

Lieutenant?

*[Pause]*

Lieutenant?

*[Pause]*

You want me to pull rank?

ROSE

He's no hallucination!

EDITH

He?

ROSE

Joe. His name is Joe.

EDITH  
Joe?

ROSE  
Yes. I don't know who or what he is – so I just call him Joe. Invisible Joe. To be exact, Ma'am.

EDITH  
As I've said rank and—never mind – why do you call him Invisible Joe?

ROSE  
Doh! Because he's invisible. I can't see him, but he's there. Invisible.

EDITH.  
A ghost.

ROSE  
I have a theory. Not sure if he's a ghost. Or some other form of life. Something as yet undiscovered. I mean, maybe we're wrong when we claim to be the dominant species on the planet.

EDITH  
This Joe. Where do you encounter him? Where does he make himself known to you?

ROSE  
Mostly my quarters. Until recently—

EDITH  
Recently—

ROSE  
Yes. He's taken to following me around. He's here now. Aren't you, Joe?

*[Edith stiffens.]*

EDITH  
Here? Now? Where?

ROSE  
I don't know. He's invisible.

EDITH  
So how do we know Joe's here.

ROSE  
I can smell him. Can't you?  
*[Pause]*  
If I had my NVs. We could see him.

EDITH

He can be seen through night vision goggles?

ROSE

Yes, Ma'am. Lock it in. Shut the lights. There he is. Gotta do it pronto quick, though. He's fast. I don't think he likes being looked at. I got my goggles in my vehicle. I could retrieve--

EDITH

Let's hold off on that. For now. How did it begin? How did Joe first manifest himself?

[*Pause*]

How did Joe first manifest, Lieutenant--?

ROSE

You believe me.

EDITH

Whether I believe you or not is not the issue. What matters, to me, is that *you* believe he exists. I get that.

ROSE

So, you don't believe me.

EDITH

I believe that certain of our enthusiasms and impulses often manifest themselves through, well, 'phantasmagorical' visions. Our ancestral mothers referred to them as "ecstasies." Some women have visions of gods, angels, demons. You see a guy named Joe.

ROSE

Not really.

EDITH

Ah, because he's invisible.

ROSE

Yes.

EDITH

How did Joe *first* manifest himself to you then?

[*Pause*]

Lieutenant?

ROSE

It was in my quarters. First or second night back from-- I'd been asleep for a while. Then I awoke. I mean I woke up. Which isn't me. I always sleep straight through 'til morning. But there I was. Wide awake. Peter-Pan in the dead of night--

[*violent tussle*]

Leave me alone!!

EDITH

What's going on?

ROSE

Joe.

EDITH

What's he doing?

ROSE

Nothing. Now.

*[Silence]*

EDITH

Go on. You woke up—

ROSE

I'd not been feeling well.

EDITH

How so?

ROSE

Agitated. Nervous. On the verge of something— of something— I'm still— Christ, my sweat glands are on overdrive.

EDITH

*[reading file]*

Your last Citation. You were involved in a roadside melee, two months before your return. That could have something to do with—

ROSE

No, it couldn't.

EDITH

Lieutenant, you killed fifteen insurgents—

*[another tussle – more violent – Rose is almost knocked off her chair]*

ROSE

Knock it off!!

*[Pause]*

EDITH

Lieutenant--?

ROSE

*[recovering]*

I'm okay.

[Pause]

It was seventeen.

EDITH

I'm sorry?

ROSE

You said fifteen 'insurgents.' It was seventeen. Two died later.

EDITH

Surely that had to have an effect?

ROSE

It was an ambush. I was defending my-- I did what I had to-- It's okay. I'm fine with it. Look-- Just become I'm a woman doesn't mean I don't enjoy the kill.

[Pause]

Yes, okay, sometimes I wake up in a sweat. Yes, sometimes I want to climb on top of a bus and scream until I'm singing blood. You know, the usual. But that's normal. It'll pass. But not this. Not Joe.

EDITH

What happened that night when you awoke?

ROSE

It wasn't like I *awoke*. I was asleep. And then I wasn't. Crazy. So I decided to get up and pee. I didn't need to, you know, pee. Just needed something to give me a reason for being awake. I stood up. And froze. No, I didn't freeze. But I couldn't move. My body wasn't listening--

[Pause]

I was alone in that room. Then I wasn't. I sensed no movement. Heard nothing. It was quiet. Standing in front of a casket quiet. But I knew. I knew someone. Some thing – was in the room with me. I was so sure I said, 'Show yourself!!'

[Pause]

'Do something!!!'

[Pause]

'Coward!'

[Pause]

And then...and then – I felt a small eddy of warm air on my cheek. As if something hot had just ran past me--

[a rush of warm air rushes past her]

Like that. It's like he – I – Uh –

EDITH

What?

ROSE

I feel– I mean–

EDITH

How did you feel?

ROSE

Powerless. Insignificant. Ordinary. Joe. Only Joe matters.

EDITH

What happened next?

[*Pause*]

You couldn't move?

ROSE

No, Ma'am – I – I –

EDITH

Couldn't call out?

ROSE

No. It was like – something – something was holding a hand over my mouth.

EDITH

You said your body stopped listening. You couldn't will it to move. To act.

ROSE

Exactly.

EDITH

Lieutenant, you may have been in a hypnagogic state.

ROSE

Hypnagogic? Another fucking college word.

EDITH

A hypnagogic state is that state which lies somewhere between wakefulness and sleep.

ROSE

Dammit! You sound like Quirke. She said I was suffering from an 'organic brain disturbance stimulated by an underlying war neuroses.' I rejected that theory. And I reject your fucking collegiate hand-off!

[*Pause*]

Sorry, Ma'am. But I wasn't half-asleep. I was in full wakefulness. It wasn't a dream either. I was standing. On my feet. Who dreams standing up? He was behind me. Watching me. Right, Joe? You were standing right freaking behind me. You're standing right freaking behind me now. Aren't you? Reading me. Scanning me.

EDITH

He watches you.

ROSE

I sometimes have to force myself to breathe. This is obscene. He stands there for hours. Searching for weaknesses. Every night. Since– since–

EDITH

Since when? Stay with me. Since when?

ROSE

Since my last deployment.

EDITH

*Kunduz.*

ROSE

Yes. That's where he comes from.

EDITH

Joe?

ROSE

Yes. I brought him back with me. It was that 'melee' you mentioned from my file. It was on a Sunday. 1930 hours. Night riding the desert. Desert cools at night. It's actually quite beautiful. Smooth lavender sand. Goes on forever. It was like a kid's drawing, really. And the silence. You could hear yourself thinking. And all I could think was...where does all this fucking sand come from?

[*Pause*]

I was point in a four-vehicle escort. Riding shotgun for a supply convoy. 20 tractor trailers. Heading west. On alternate Supply Route designated 'Pussy Road.'

EDITH

Pussy Road?

ROSE

Deadliest road in Afghanistan. Definitely not for pussies. 25 kilos in. We get our asses kicked by 30 AAFs-- That means, 'Anti-Afghani Force--'

EDITH

I know what it means!

ROSE

You were there, weren't you? I can tell.

EDITH

One tour. 2016. Six months in *Kabul*, evaluating--

[*Pause*]

Sorry. Go on. 'You got your asses kicked by 30 AAFs--'

ROSE

Yeah. Dudes ambushed us from the north. Did you kill anyone?

[*Pause*]

EDITH

Yes. Go on, please--

ROSE

Dudes ambushed us from the north. Turds were hiding in road-side irrigation ditches. Ditches we dug. Lotta shit went down. Fast. My dumbass gunner leaps out the vehicle and opens up. And of course the fucker gets blasted-- Blasted! Then freezes. Not bleeding or anything. Body armor. But he's standing there like like like Lot's wife. So I jump out. Grab his ass. And take him airborne. Just as one of them tosses something and blows fucking Hummie to hell. We hit the ditch seconds in front of a wall of flying shrapnel. I grab his M240. Start laying down fire. Whole megillah over in seconds. No casualties on our side. 15, I mean 17 AAF-ies DOA. The rest surrendered.

[*Pause*]

Back at Viper. Outpost Viper. I asked Luther why he froze. See – he's a good kid. Good soldier. Good crazy fucking fundamental Christian Soldier. Loves killing for Jesus. Especially Muzzies--

[*another more violent tussle*]

His word! It was his word!

[*she calms*]

Claims he froze when he saw the Ghul.

EDITH

A gull? In the desert?

ROSE

No. A Ghul. A desert demon. An invisible desert demon. Luther said he saw it through his night vision scope. Said he saw it running at him like it was on a mission. Really pissed off. And fast. Moving real fast. Arms outstretched. Like it was going to grab onto him. But it didn't grab onto him. No. He said. He said – He said it grabbed onto me. Joe. He grabbed onto me--

*Something touches Edith; she jumps.*

EDITH

What was that? What was--?

ROSE

I think he likes you--

### **SCENE V**

*Edith in the Mirror. Her mother behind her.*

MOTHER

You used to be popular. Do you remember? Too much mascara.

[*Pause*]

I never said that --

EDITH

Yes, you did, you said it quite a lot -- and a lot more -- Do you remember:

MOTHER

"If you go out alone. By yourself. Five guys will jump out from behind a tree and assault you!!"

EDITH



You first said that – when?

MOTHER

I never said that, either. You put words where they don't belong. You're like a novelist or something.

EDITH

You did say it. Said it that night I defied you by walking downtown to see a movie by myself. I was 17.

MOTHER

Your got Dad riled up too.

EDITH

I won't deny it.

MOTHER

Tomorrow is five, no six years since he – Since your father – There's to be a graveside ceremony  
And a headstone – finally.

EDITH

I'm busy.

MOTHER

You're deflecting –

EDITH

I'm busy deflecting –

MOTHER

Your father wouldn't resist a visit –

EDITH

He's dead.

MOTHER

Your sister will be there. With a wreath. Which she will lay. Upon your father.

EDITH

Good for her.

MOTHER

I don't know why you're avoiding standing at your father's – I thought it would please you. After all,  
he can't –

EDITH

Can't what, Mother?

MOTHER

Your sister speaks with your father. Every day. She says they sometimes hold hands.

## SCENE VI

*Edith and Rose.*

ROSE

Talking about sand makes me thirsty.

*[she produces a water bottle]*

Do you mind?

EDITH

*[shakes head]*

ROSE

He subsists on water. Joe. I keep a glass on my nightstand. Before I go to bed the glass is full. In the morning – empty.

EDITH

Evaporated?

ROSE

No. It was in a pint glass. It would take days. Weeks for it to fully evaporate. He drinks it. I've seen him suck up the whole glass in one gulp. Now I have to keep two glasses on my nightstand. If I don't. His anger heats up the room. Then—

EDITH

Then what?

ROSE

He attacks.

EDITH

He attacks you? Invisible Joe attacks you?

ROSE

He's invisible. But strong.

EDITH

You can actually feel him?

ROSE

*[nods]*

EDITH

These attacks – are they sexual in nature?

ROSE

*[nods]*

EDITH

Tell me about--

ROSE

Joe! Um—I—

[*Pause*]

I'm lying down. He's across the room. I've displeased him somehow. *What'd I do, Joe?* He makes his move. I—I— He's on me! Get off!! I can't move—My mouth! He's covered my mouth--

*Rose's arms are pinned to her side. She SCREAMS and SCREAMS and SCREAMS though closed mouth. Then...Silence. Her mouth opens. Her body un-stiffens. It's over.*

EDITH

Lieutenant. Come back. Here. With me

ROSE

I can't. Don't make me tell you anymore.

EDITH

Look at me. Look at me! Okay, you don't have to talk about it. But I want you to do something. I want you to vocalize how you felt during these attacks. Can you do that?

[*Pause*]

Can you do that?

ROSE

[*HOWLS from the depths of hell – it should shake the rafters.*]

There now.

*Edith embraces Rose. Rose looks at Edith like a child looking at her mother. Rose has a realization.*

ROSE

He's gone. He's gone! I don't know what you did, but he's gone! I think I scared him off. Must have been all that screaming. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

*Rose HUGS Edith, then kisses her on the cheek, and RUNS OUT.*

EDITH

Lieutenant, come back. Lieutenant. Lieutenant!

## **SCENE VII**

*Edith and Natasha.*

NATASHA

You fell in love with her.

EDITH

I don't fall in love with my – in your lecture you said ghosts often attach themselves to people with deep psychological issues.

NATASHA

I believe I said, scars. Deep psychological scars.

[*Pause*]

Are you finally ready to face *your* dead? How many are you credited with? Kills, I mean. I was never certain.

EDITH

Five.

NATASHA

Have you processed these kills?

EDITH

Yes.

NATASHA

How?

EDITH

I have my ways.

NATASHA

Remorse?

EDITH

None. No remorse. Please don't assume that because I'm a woman I don't appreciate the kill.

[*Pause*]

I had no right to say that. Those are not my words.

NATASHA

Whose, then?

[*Pause*]

EDITH

Okay. Okay. Suppose-- Suppose a ghost *has* attached itself to Rose -- to the Lieutenant. But what if he's -- What if 'it' isn't a ghost? What if it exists as a form of life we've yet to encounter. An actual being. With its own laws and parameters of existence--

NATASHA

Oh my god. You believe her.

EDITH

No, I do not believe her. I'm theorizing.

NATASHA

You believe only what you can see, taste, touch, or test, is that it?

EDITH

Yes.

NATASHA

Psychiatrists don't believe in God, then.

EDITH

I work in a world of dreams and fantasies. I know the difference between reality and delusion. God is a delusion. An invention. We are an extraordinarily ordinary race. Yet we create gods. Each life form develops its own version. Bees live and die for honey. Caveman worshiped fire. Methodists make casseroles.

*They laugh. Natasha turns away.*

NATASHA

I am so angry with you— What we had— It was so— It worked. We worked. Then—

[Pause]

Until you— I had not come to grips with living. I thought. I wrote. I taught. I lectured on other people's ghosts. I marked time. The spark. The ignition. I didn't— There was nothing. Until you—

[Pause]

After you. Well — it's the loneliness. It eats like acid on a butterfly. Did you know that? I can certainly stand *being* alone. I'm good at being alone. I know how to work a goddamn remote thank-you. It's the hole. That space you carved. It remains just that. Empty. I so want to love you again but I fear I will be barking into an empty space. You are incapable of love. —

*Edith walks over to Natasha and kisses her.*

*Then, suddenly, brutally, Natasha is KNOCKED across the room by an unseen force. She recovers, and approaches Edith, seemingly for help, and again is violently PUSHED away, this time falling to the floor.*

EDITH

That wasn't me.

*Long Silence. Natasha pulls herself together.*

NATASHA

No worries. No worries. Did I tell you that I'm thinking of becoming a Methodist. I have many Methodist friends. And they rarely think of God. Or love. Just casseroles.

*Natasha leaves, before she's out, she turns to Edith.*

NATASHA

You said you enjoyed the kill. So — how was it?

*Natasha EXITS.*

EDITH

I receive pleasure from her pain. That exquisite ache on the face of the disregarded is addicting.

*A rush of warm air pushes past Edith.*

EDITH

Who are you? What are you? Show yourself!

*[Pause]*

Do something!

*[Pause]*

Coward!

*Mother ENTERS.*

MOTHER

Give him what he wants.

EDITH

I don't know what he wants.

MOTHER

He wants you. What's the matter crazy girl? Stop crying. His desire keeps you alive. Without his shine your precious ivy dies on the vine. Let him swoon. If not you, then whom. Drink your wine, give him love, get out of his way. Let him love you, crazy girl. Let him care. Then for God's sake fix your hair.

EDITH

Why me? I don't deserve this. I'm extraordinary.

MOTHER

Except for that hair.

EDITH

I did what I was told.

MOTHER

You most certainly did.

EDITH

Rebelled when it was needed.

MOTHER

A regular suffragette.

EDITH

I can be a feminist if that's what it takes.

MOTHER

Brunhilde in the flesh. Surrounded by impenetrable fire.

*[Pause]*

Your father dreamed of Valhalla. I dreamed of how to clean it

EDITH

Is that where all of this began? My father?

MOTHER

It began with a whoosh of hot air. And there he was, standing at the foot of your bed.

EDITH

And I couldn't move—

MOTHER

No. You chose not to.

EDITH

Because—

MOTHER

You loved him.

EDITH

You knew—

MOTHER

Of course. Your ghost knows too—

EDITH

He does not exist!

MOTHER

Neither do I, yet we speak daily.

EDITH

What am I to do?

MOTHER

Do what I did.

EDITH

YOU SURRENDERED!

MOTHER

In war victory lies not in winning every battle but in defeating the enemy, no matter how long it takes. Each generation is its own battlefield. Joe is your destiny. Embrace him. In remote antiquity the minds of women were visited by visions of divine figures of matchless beauty and stupendous stature.

EDITH

He's not matchless. He's not stupendous. And he is certainly not divine.

MOTHER

Have it your way, my love, but as I see it, you have no choice. He's not going anywhere.

SHE

But I do. I have a choice. I didn't back then. When I – When I killed – When I was killed.

[Pause]

“Let's explore the meaning of that memory. How does that make you feel?”

Guilt is an after thought. “Tell me all about it – ” I killed. I killed–

[Pause]

Oh my god. Is that it, Joe? Is it because I killed your buddies. Your brothers. You? The memory is a series of microscopic neural dots. Linked engrams. Holding memories in place. The memory. The event no longer exists. It has passed, leaving residual traces. I killed–

[Pause]

The more powerful or traumatic the event, the more powerful the residual traces left on the brain. By exploring the memory – By facing it – I can rid you of certain choices. Choices. The trauma was so pervasive. “I want you to vocalize how you felt during these attacks. Can you do that? Can you do that?”

[Edith HOWLS]

GET OFF ME!!!!

*Spent, Edith staggers across the stage, SITS, and collects herself.*

EDITH

I'm a psychiatrist. I'm a soldier. I fought-- I killed-- I was killed! But I survived.

[Pause]

I have no business with ghosts. I cannot, I will not-- My life, my very existence, calls for me to be extraordinary. My job depends on it. My job demands it. Only the bourgeoisie get haunted.

[Pause]

I am free.

*Edith SIGHS, a long, luxurious sigh. After a moment, she watches the glass of water on the table EMPTY BY ITSELF, as if someone is lapping at it.*

**THE END**