

Rebecca and Tom's home. So hot we hear the boiler whistling from off. Low pitch whine. *Hot Stuff* by Donna Summer, the bass gently shakes the walls.

Sluggishly throws off her bag, keys, jacket.

REBECCA

Hey. I'm home.

TOM

Hey! I'm in the kitchen!

REBECCA

groovy... Can you turn that down?

TOM

(unaware, yelling)

How's it goin'?

REBECCA

(unwillingly)

Bad day! My head's still killing me. I spilled my coffee on my pants on the way to work. Amazing Amanda helped me when I got there. Terry saw me trying to sneak over to the water cooler-

TOM

Disgusting Terry! No!

TOM bangs along to the song on pans with spoons.

REBECCA

yes. He asked me how the party went on Saturday. Then he started touching the bottle Amanda just gave me-

TOM comes in from the kitchen. The pitch rises.
They do not notice.

TOM

A fucking asshole is what he is. I swear if I get my chance with him, oof.

Punches hand and then winces jokingly.

He's got some nerve. Not to mention what a disaster that party was babe.

REBECCA

Really?

TOM

It's not your fault.

TOM kisses REBECCA and hugs her.

You were too tired to pull together a whole event like you usually make- Oh. You're a little sticky! What, did you forget how to drink? It comes out of the top, dear. You know that right?

REBECCA

yeah, well, I've been feeling like SHIT- you know what, my head feels like it's about to split open so I just need to relax and decompress. Been a long day, dear.

TOM

Your head's really been hurting for a while hasn't it?

TOM puts his hand on her forehead. Once again winces.

Maybe you should get it looked at.

REBECCA

Tom, I thought I already told you before -

TOM

I know! But what if you -

REBECCA

It's just a headache, and you aren't helping. What would help me is turning the music down.

TOM

Sure, I hear you. I'm just making a little something in there, so I do like to have a little ambiance. And besides I think what is really bothering you is-

REBECCA

Tom, I don't want to-

TOM

It's just - what if it's bad/ like worse than we thought. It's been a long time and you haven't gotten better. You need to let me take care of you, baby. That's what I'm here for.

REBECCA

Tom I don't want to fight, but you need to please just give it some space. I think- I just need to be alone a little bit... ugh, I need to lie down. Just- Give me 15 minutes. Please.

TOM

Yes. I agree. Nice.

REBECCA

Thanks.

TOM

I'll get a blanket. There's this kind of warming blanket thing that I got for you I was thinking it'd be good to use. It's just back here somewhere...

TOM walks off to find blanket.

TOM

(singing)

HOT STUFF baby tonight! Oh yeah! Looking for some - Huh! It's funny, I was listening to a podcast and they said that warming blankets help with stress and stuff because they -

She walks into the bathroom. The stage changes. *Hot Stuff* becomes muted, but the dull pounding bass remains. The groan and then whine of a boiler offstage. In a dirty, rusting closet, we see a bath which barely fits in the corner. Opposite is a toilet, filthy. REBECCA stands over the sink, one hand over her head. She reaches behind the mirror and produces a box with cleaning products. The mirror makes a dragging noise. It echoes. She winces. Her screams are drowned by her headache. From off "HOT STUFF" is harmonized, the sound distorts.

REBECCA

(As she puts on plastic gloves)

It's pretty gross. And I'd be psychotic to think to any of this mess is mine. Ugh, that's not my hair... How is it that long? Oh! Back hair, I'm sure. Disgusting... This isn't fair right? What has he been doing? I'm putting so much of my life into Tom. When I decided not to go see the Dali Lama, was it because there was a family emergency that weekend in November, and we stayed inside the whole time. I practically nursed him when he sprained his ankle and "couldn't walk on the left." I'm treated worse than our poor sweet tub. How can he not see that?

She sprays, begins to scrub, but the scrubbing sounds like the harsh dragging of the mirror. She slows and stops.

REBECCA

My party sucked?! That lazy, disorganized, shitheap said my party sucked! Oh! My head! ...I mean WHAT am I doing? What are you doing? ...? I'm cleaning up his mess? What the -?

“HOT STUFF”

I don't know. I don't...

The sound of keys. She throws everything together and puts the box back behind the mirror. She leaves it open. REBECCA reaches under the toilet, produces a box with a candle wrapped in a blanket. She takes the blanket and drapes it over the toilet. Lights change and accentuate the new topography of the room, lavender. HOT STUFF fades out.

Who's hot stuff does he think he gets? Fuck. My head! TOM, of all people! I'm the one without power?? I mean come on! What the fuck happened? Were we, we were gonna die alone... I needed someone, he knew if he was in, it would be smooth sailing. He's such a huge part of my life... I didn't call anyone when I got home, or even when I got off work. I gotta cut this shit out.

She undresses with effort as her clothes stick to her.

...What are we doing? WHAT are we doing? Ah my head. My head is not an eggshell, so why does it feel like it's being pecked open!

She puts the candle on the toilet. She lights it.

I need a bath. I need some -

“HOT STUFF”

Rest!

She turns on the bath, the faucet begins to whistle with heat. We hear the keys jingle.

REBECCA

The water runs through the tub as if it were hitting sand. It hisses like a snake. Canyons are created in a moment, they collect and turn with the ribs of rust in the tub. The dust is rising. But it doesn't burn my fingers, nor does it hurt my lungs. The air is thick, like a blanket. It's warm.

“HOT STUFF”

Mmm. This is welcome heat. The water is hot. Though it is clear, to move through it takes constant will, all my energy, to the last drop. The water's even hotter. Looks trick my dear, and can deceive the way others perceive you and that is why I'm here. Tired and sore, the phoenix in me is nearly no more, where will she go, where does she go? Only one place, down, she knows only one direction, down. It is nearly time for her to drown. She must go, in this fire I must be doused and steam must be put all around. The fire in me is burning hot, too. Whew. I think I'd better cool off.

Rebecca lays her hand over the water's edge. She submerges herself, slowly. As her head goes under, the sounds of the play all go off together, creating the sound of a cawing phoenix. Then the stage is still. After a minute or so, Rebecca stands back up out of the water. She recollects her things, placing everything back. She drains the tub. The lights readjust. Rebecca walks out of the bathroom. Tom is waiting, on his phone.

TOM

Becca. Are you alright? Can we talk?

REBECCA

Yeah, I'm fine. But our relationship isn't.

TOM

Okay. How's your head?

REBECCA

Head's fine now. You know what? I am starving, though. What are you cooking in there?

TOM

Nothing now.

REBECCA

When I came home you were cooking dinner. Is that wrong?

TOM

Like I said it's just a little something... I- don't know... if there's enough for both of us- I was/just making mac and cheese for myself.

REBECCA

You cooked for one? You need to tell me you're joking or we need to get really serious for a second. What were you doing in there?

TOM

I didn't know you were hungry. If you/ had told me or texted me on the way home, maybe I'd -

REBECCA

You didn't know I was hungry? I came back from work, Hon. I haven't eaten since lunch and it's 8 pm. I couldn't be bothered to text you? Could you turn off the music?

TOM

You don't like Donna Summers?

REBECCA

Summer.

TOM

Her name is Donna Summers.

REBECCA

It's really not.

TOM

... You sure?

REBECCA

Do you agree?

TOM

To what?

REBECCA

I said our relationship isn't fine. You avoided the question. I then asked you what you were doing and the answer was "cooking for one, dear".

TOM

... Do I agree that our/ relationship is-

REBECCA

That we're not the same as we used to be. That you've changed and as a result I've changed. For the /worse, Tom!

TOM

Changed?/ I've changed? Last time I checked its been 10 years, there's been plenty of time to let me know I've *changed!*

REBECCA

Tom. You used to be honest with me, and you used to ask me how my day was. You used to listen to the answers -

TOM

Am- am I losing my mind? Of course I listen- when am I not trying to talk to you! I've been chasing you around for weeks, you keep talking about these headaches, now your head is fine and was fine the whole time.

REBECCA

That's not what this is about, is it?

TOM

So what then babe? Hm? Where are you gonna go with this?

REBECCA

You have thought of my life as a tool to make you happy-

TOM

No, Becca. We're not having another one of these emotional ambushes. This way of you taking care of yourself isn't working ok? It's time for Tom to be in charge. It's about time you let me help you.

REBECCA

Tom, I'm having a lot of trouble listening to the mindless masculine dribble that's been jackhammering out of your lips.

TOM

Becca I'm trying to look out for you! You've been going on and on for weeks about your head hurts this and no I want space that and you need to let me help you now. We tried your way and it didn't fucking work. You've been a wreck-

REBECCA

No, TOM. I don't. You need me. You like it when I come home happy, full yet skinny bellied, and horny. Honestly, you cooked for the first 2 months of our marriage to impress me I suppose and you managed that with a couple of online recipes and about 6 too many blue aprons. But answer me this, Thomas, do you know when that last time I cried is?

TOM

Let me guess, you were crying in there? I'm -

REBECCA

And before then.

TOM

I don't know, yesterday? Earlier today? Oh. The car. Before you came in? Oh, Becca...

The soft caw of a phoenix, and then the sound of a stream, or maybe just the steam of a bath.

REBECCA

In fact, it has been a year and a half. My heart has turned to a fortress in our place of love, our home. A fortress, protected, set to respond to threats, to cast them away with fire.

TOM
(Quietly)

Are you calling me a threat?

REBECCA
Yes, you threaten my heart, three or four times a day.

TOM
Becca I would never threaten you! Don't be insane! I love you. You're my world.

REBECCA
Your world is muted and dull. Mine breathes blues through my hair and past my eyes. Purples in the bathroom, red in the skies. Red all over.

TOM
Great, so you're seeing red?

REBECCA
I have seared your grease from my eyes as they are now pure and might see more clearly. They see not red but everything, and most importantly, the truth.

REBECCA walks over to the keys on the desk. The keys jingle in her hands. She moves to pictures of her and TOM. The pitch whines.

TOM
Rebecca what the hell are you talking about? I want to take you to the hospital! I want you to be safe!

REBECCA
It's time to burn your image from my brain. I must cleanse you from this house.

TOM
Becca! Stop!

REBECCA
Burn this image to the heavens, that they might better find a use for him! I have tried and tried! But now must we reckon with our decisions!

REBECCA pulls out a lighter. She begins to light little fires around the house, lobbing them at TOM.

TOM

Becca! What are you doing? You're gonna burn the house down!

REBECCA

Yes! Try to stomp out my fires, you're too slow!

TOM

You're crazy! You need help!

REBECCA

OUT!

TOM

I'm taking control -

REBECCA

I cast your presence out of my home! You are never to return, foul and spiteful spirit!

REBECCA jingles the keys.

TOM

Those are mine!

REBECCA

They are yours no longer!

She throws them out the window.

TOM

You insane bitch! I have to go find that now!

REBECCA

You will find your clothing outside my house when you come crawling back.

TOM

We own it together! Goddamn it! I'll be back when you're not losing your mind!

TOM runs out of the house. REBECCA stands still, then goes and puts out the pictures' flames. She throws them out. She giggles to herself. She goes to the kitchen and turns down the music, taking her space, returning to the room with a bowl of mac and cheese.

REBECCA

Oh! I almost forgot- The wine. Thanks Amanda. Wow. My head. Oh I think I might need a little more.

Fade.