

ACT IV: WRATH

AN IN-BETWEEN PLACE

BECCA emerges from the darkness and greets the WITNESS like an old friend. Her face is blanched and her guts sway at her knees again.

BECCA

(*To WITNESS*) When Michael and I were in the second grade, before we were friends, there was this boy who liked to kill things at recess. Mitch Vanover. Cocky little fucker. Really punch-able face. A smear of freckles over a shit-eating grin. He'd follow the lazy path of a butterfly to pounce the moment it landed and rip its' wings off. Then he'd watch it struggle to walk. I don't think he meant to destroy the anthill. But slowly, inevitably, this goal consumed him. The colony had set up shop beneath the jungle gym, smack dab in the middle of traffic. Mitch didn't target the ants in earnest until he saw Michael shepherding the other kids around the hill, protecting the colony from being accidentally stamped out, or tripped over, or worse. Gentleness was an affront to Mitch's truer nature, I can understand that now.

Beat

What gets me is Mitch always went about it the same way and it *always* took Michael by surprise. I never understood that. The predator would stalk at a distance for a time, then tackle Michael from behind, smash his face into the dirt and, once he stopped struggling, jam his heel down on the colony *hard*. Over and over and over. He'd kick it to smithereens and then, without fail, Michael would get up and hit back. They'd grapple over the mound for as long as the teachers would allow. At first, they ended the fights immediately with military precision. But when it settled into routine, the faculty more or less gave up. Eventually, Michael and Mitch were the most dependable entertainment around. Mitch won more often than Michael and the hill was usually decimated. But every time, without fail, the ants rallied and rebuilt. I think Michael took this as a personal victory. It wasn't his to take, but he took it all the same. I did too.

Beat

I saw him talking to them a few times. The ants. He took to spending every last second he could hovering over the them, playing with them. In case Mitch came back. Or- shit-maybe he was just that lonely. Once, I saw him step on the hill. I think it was after he realized how durable the colony really was. He took off his shoes, socks, and just, shoved his toes as far down as he could and let the ants feast. Sometimes for a minute, maybe... sometimes more.

I used to watch him from far away but even from a distance I could see the colony swarming over his bare legs. They coated him like a teeming fur but I never saw him cry. Not even once.

Beat

Actions *do* have consequences. Or they should. I know that much by now.

A sound like rushing water. The in-between place becomes:

THE RIVER.

The DAVID OF WRATH stands in wait on the downstage bank. The sun burns blood-red. MICHAEL rises from the water. They consider each other for a moment.

MICHAEL

You changed your face again.

DAVID OF WRATH

Force of habit.

The DAVID OF WRATH moves closer.

MICHAEL

Stop.

The DAVID OF WRATH does.

MICHAEL

Just... gimme a second.

DAVID OF WRATH

Of course.

MICHAEL

I've been down... *quite* the path here, David. Hill and dale and back the fuck again.

DAVID OF WRATH

And your efforts are deeply felt and appreciated. You are to be rewarded above all.

MICHAEL

You killed my friend. Becca is dead because of you. She was only trying to help me-

DAVID OF WRATH

Ah- but 'me' is not *us*... is it? And let's be real- you were never going to kill in your own name. (*Opening his arms*) Crawl. Please.

MICHAEL sinks beneath the waves and emerges on the shore on his hands and knees, eyes never leaving the DAVID OF WRATH.

DAVID OF WRATH

Good. Delight taught you well.

MICHAEL rises and meets the DAVID OF WRATH's embrace.

DAVID OF WRATH

I'm growing stronger, love. Can you feel it? You fortify me.

MICHAEL

Yeah... you're warm again.

DAVID OF WRATH

We can thank Becca's blood for that. Want to sample the benefits?

The DAVID OF WRATH kisses MICHAEL, who can't help leaning into it.

DAVID OF WRATH

(*Pulling away*) Real enough now?

MICHAEL

More than enough... why can't this be it? What's stopping us from lingering here forever?

DAVID OF WRATH

Because there are higher pleasures to come. There's shimmering fields where I'm taking you... acres and acres of serenity. As much as you want, we'll find.

MICHAEL

Our cabin?

DAVID OF WRATH

Of course. It's all there. Everything we've made. Anything you can imagine.

MICHAEL

What will it smell like?

DAVID OF WRATH

Like... lavender, cherry blossoms, fresh-cut grass, and gasoline all at the same time.

MICHAEL

And you'll be with me. Always?

DAVID OF WRATH

Always. We'll wake up slowly in a big white bed every morning and I'll rock you to sleep every night. Would you like that?

MICHAEL showers the DAVID OF WRATH with kisses.

DAVID OF WRATH

I'll take that as a yes?

MICHAEL

It's not even a question.

DAVID OF WRATH

Then it's yours. If you'll just meet me halfway, I can bring you miracles. And all it will take is one final push. Can you do that for me, love?

MICHAEL

Of course. I love you.

Beat

DAVID OF WRATH

Say it again.

MICHAEL

I... I love you.

The DAVID OF WRATH wrenches MICHAEL's chin up and stares unblinking into his eyes.

DAVID OF WRATH

I can tell when you're lying.

MICHAEL

I- I'm *not*-

DAVID OF WRATH

You're afraid again. You reek of it. Am I scaring you, love?

MICHAEL

No- of course not, you-

DAVID OF WRATH

You resented my absence. Do you resent my love?

MICHAEL

I *endured* your absence-

The DAVID OF WRATH pulls away.

No! No- I'm sorry. You're right, I'm sorry. There is. Forgive me, but there *is* doubt.

DAVID OF WRATH

I gave my life for you- for *us*. What is there left to doubt?

MICHAEL

You said you're taking me somewhere but-

DAVID OF WRATH

Yes?

MICHAEL

That's not how Sera put it. You're supposed to come back to us. I'm not supposed to go anywhere-

DAVID OF WRATH

But Sera's scope is pathetically limited! She grasps and paws feebly at low hanging fruit that would drive her insane were she to actually get one off the vine and into her *lying, slanderous* mouth. She cannot imagine- *you* cannot imagine what I alone can give.

MICHAEL

I'm not backing out and I'm not saying no. I just... want an equal partnership! That means no secrets. Are you prepared to give me that?

DAVID OF WRATH

I... what if you leave me...

Beat

MICHAEL

I won't. I can't. May I hold your hand and ask a difficult question?

Beat

DAVID OF WRATH

No running?

MICHAEL

On my life. No running.

They pinkie swear.

MICHAEL

Did I kill you?

Beat

DAVID OF WRATH

It wasn't your fault... I may have died at your hand but it wasn't your fault.

Beat

MICHAEL

Do I have to do it again?

Beat. MICHAEL understands. The DAVID OF WRATH holds him close.

DAVID OF WRATH

I'll be with you the whole time.

MICHAEL

I'm so sorry-

DAVID OF WRATH

I know.

Beat

MICHAEL

If this is what you need to live again, then I can make my peace with it- but.... I'm so scared, David.

DAVID OF WRATH pulls MICHAEL into a deep kiss.

DAVID OF WRATH

Hey- look at me. You can do this. The path must be retread and Wrath must be sealed. Them's the breaks. Exorcise your brutality and blessings will rain down upon you like a monsoon. I give you my word. My blessing.

The DAVID OF WRATH kisses MICHAEL's forehead.

MICHAEL

Not now... not just yet... please. Let me hold you a little longer.

DAVID OF WRATH

It's okay. I'm here. Say yes, love.

MICHAEL

David...

DAVID OF WRATH

Say yes...

MICHAEL

I can't-

DAVID OF WRATH

Come on. We've come this far, baby... just a little further and I'm yours forever. *Us* forever. All of us...

The DAVID OF FEAR and DAVID OF DELIGHT emerge from the waters.

MICHAEL

Wait- no! Why are they here?

DAVID OF WRATH

It's all me, love.

DAVID OF DELIGHT

One-

DAVID OF FEAR

-and the same.

DAVID OF DELIGHT

Always has been.

DAVID OF FEAR

Always will.

MICHAEL

No- I don't *want* this- *them*... you!

DAVID OF WRATH

It's all right, love. Your eyes have adjusted to the dark, that's all. Now hold still-

The DAVID OF FEAR and DAVID OF DELIGHT encircle MICHAEL, slamming him to the ground. The DAVID OF WRATH kneels and cradles MICHAEL's head in his hands.

MICHAEL

NO! Get off me! *SERA!*

DAVID OF WRATH

Hush. This will only take a second. We've done this before.

MICHAEL

PULL ME OUT- *SERA!*

DAVID OF WRATH

Shhh... Sera can't hear you, love. She's out corpse-hunting.

DAVID OF FEAR

She's nearing the water's edge-

DAVID OF DELIGHT

She's more afraid than she'll ever admit.

DAVID OF FEAR/DAVID OF
DELIGHT

Shhh...

MICHAEL

No! Help me!

DAVID OF WRATH

You're spoiling the moment, love. She wants us apart. She wants me all to herself. If you weren't a threat to her before you sure as shit are now, pumpkin. Help me end this... help me end her...

All three David's lay their hands on MICHAEL's face, inhale at once, and fire an invisible force into him. MICHAEL seizes as though wired to a jet engine.

DAVID OF FEAR

Let me in, love.

DAVID OF DELIGHT

It's what you've always wanted.

DAVID OF WRATH

Take my power... take my force. Use it for me.

DAVID OF FEAR

On my behalf...

MICHAEL

Please... it's so bright I can't- I can't...

DAVID OF FEAR

Let me give you sight.

DAVID OF DELIGHT

Let me give you purpose.

DAVID OF WRATH

Take me inside you. You are the womb.

MICHAEL

NO!

MICHAEL's spine and head bend impossibly backwards. He opens his mouth and screams with the voice of thousands.

MICHAEL

I RENOUNCE YOU!

MICHAEL's body buckles inward and the three David's are flung backwards by an unseen force. MICHAEL is momentarily free and gasps for breath. The DAVID OF FEAR and DAVID OF DELIGHT scuttle away like roaches and cower behind the DAVID OF WRATH, who regards MICHAEL as one regards the family dog after an unexpected bite. MICHAEL forces himself into a standing position.

MICHAEL

You... are a SHITTY BOYFRIEND.

DAVID OF WRATH

I only want to give you *me*, love. In my entirety. I thought you'd understand.

MICHAEL

Not like that! There's nothing left of me like that. Why would you-

DAVID OF WRATH

You would cast me out? After everything I've given you. Michael- I love you. I thought you appreciated that-

MICHAEL

I do! Please- I want you- I do. I just- let me think... I-

MICHAEL closes his eyes.

DAVID OF WRATH/DAVID OF
DELIGHT/DAVID OF FEAR

You swore no running.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry.

The three David's run at MICHAEL as he slams his hands into the ground. The river becomes:

THE BUNKER.

When MICHAEL opens his eyes, the three David's have vanished. The Circles gutter and dim. MICHAEL stumbles out, barely able to stand.

MICHAEL

Sera?

MICHAEL drinks from the hose and stumbles to the stairs.

MICHAEL

Sera!

He collapses on the first step just as the cellar door opens. SERAPHINE descends slowly.

Her overalls are soaked through with river water and her face is hidden behind her hair.

MICHAEL

I didn't mean to go in! He made me- he- he brought back Becca. He moved my arms and reached inside her but it was *through* me- Sera- I'm sorry I'm so sorry I didn't mean to- I didn't do anything-

SERAPHINE holds up a hand for silence. MICHAEL obliges.

SERAPHINE

You...

SERAPHINE moves to the book-cage and retrieves her corded discipline.

SERAPHINE

Come.

MICHAEL

Sera?

SERAPHINE

KNEEL.

MICHAEL starts up and inches towards SERAPHINE. She cannot bear to look him directly in the eye.

SERAPHINE

Face the wall.

MICHAEL

I didn't mean to- I would never-

SERAPHINE cracks the discipline across MICHAEL's face. He falls to the floor.

SERAPHINE

I found the body.

SERAPHINE whips him across the chest.

MICHAEL

(Shielding himself) s-stop!

SERAPHINE

You deceitful (lash)- insubordinate (lash)- CHILD (lash).

MICHAEL cowers against the upstage wall, barely able to lift a hand to defend himself anymore.

SERAPHINE

SAY SOMETHING.

MICHAEL

I... I didn't... I don't know what you're talking about...

SERAPHINE raises the discipline but is unable to follow through. She drops the instrument and collapses to her knees.

SERAPHINE

The path has gone dark. We are ruined.

As slowly as he can, MICHAEL crawls towards SERAPHINE, knocking the discipline to the side as he approaches.

MICHAEL

What did you see? Where is he?

SERAPHINE

It was just as he said it would be. The body was caught behind a waterfall. The eddy had him pinned. He's in the back of my truck now... I- I wrapped him in a blanket as best I could. I tried- I tried to salvage him.

MICHAEL

What's wrong?

SERAPHINE finally meets MICHAEL's gaze.

SERAPHINE

David's body is no longer a viable vessel. His skull was- *is* caved in... bashed to pieces. It... he won't be able to hold his spirit again.

Beat

MICHAEL

Sera, I-

SERAPHINE

Why did you kill my son, Michael?

MICHAEL

I- I don't know! I can't remember- I can't-

SERAPHINE

Then search your thoughts!

MICHAEL

I... it- it's the same as always. He took me to the water, I'm looking at him... into him and- and everything goes black. Then I wake up at home in a bed filled with mud and... and-

SERAPHINE

Blood?

MICHAEL

...yes.

SERAPHINE cradles her head, then stands.

SERAPHINE

He pulled you into Wrath while I was out. He knew when to move so I couldn't interfere. He... I must confess to feeling pathetically out of my depth. What did he show you inside? How are you still breathing?

MICHAEL

He's more now. Three, to be exact.

SERAPHINE

Three that you could perceive. What happened?

MICHAEL

They... he held me down. All of him. Then he tried to put something inside me.

Beat

Jesus- not like *that*. It was like this... *incredible* current running through me. White-hot and- and *immense* and-

SERAPHINE

He was attempting to give you a gift.

MICHAEL

Then why did it feel like being incinerated from the inside? Not even ash left, just... nothing.

SERAPHINE

You're lucky-

MICHAEL

HOW am I lucky? What about this is supposed to make me feel like I've struck gold because I feel like I'm DYING- like... I'm rotting away from the inside-

SERAPHINE

Yet even as you burned... an underlying ecstasy?

MICHAEL

I... yes.

Beat

SERAPHINE

It has been written that transferences are a sublime experience... for the Conduit. The rest of us are left to wonder and imagine. Do I ring true?

MICHAEL

It... was the single greatest high of my life. Like- like acid and fentanyl and heroine and DMT turned up to eleven and all at once. That's what scared me the most.

SERAPHINE

Remarkable... how did you shake him?

MICHAEL

I renounced him. I... pushed back. The same way I hurt you when I closed Fear! The same way I killed Becca. The kick inside. Only stronger this time. Like- I turned his own current back on itself. Back to the source. Total force. It felt so good- I don't know how to describe it.

SERAPHINE

It's simple. You tasted of the divine... or the infernal. Depends on your outlook.

Beat

MICHAEL

What is he, Sera? I have a working theory but I'd much rather hear it from you.

Beat

Please... I need to know before we finish.

SERAPHINE

It would only upset you.

MICHAEL

Just- let's review some facts: David has no father...

SERAPHINE

...correct.

MICHAEL

So you created him from nothing-

SERAPHINE

I didn't create anything. David is older than the like of us can or will ever comprehend. He predates.

MICHAEL

Then why are you his / mother-

SERAPHINE

I didn't know who or what I was calling to when I first entered the Circles. I'd like to think they chose him for me. Almost like I left the light on and he came knocking. I like to imagine him trapped outside in a blizzard. Frozen to the bone and in need of a hot meal and a warm bed. I was... it was good to be that for him.

MICHAEL

That's- what you're describing is immaculate conception.

SERAPHINE

Indeed.

Beat

MICHAEL

You named him David... what was he called before that?

SERAPHINE

I think... you'd do better to ask him yourself. If he truly loves you, he'll be honest.

MICHAEL

And when I seal Wrath... what? I conceive?

SERAPHINE

I should think not. The Circles cannot transmute through a male body in that way.

MICHAEL

(Sinking to his knees and cradling his head) So... what now? We don't have a vessel. Even if we get him back he's never going to be like he was. Like he *should* be-

SERAPHINE

There is a last resort we haven't considered.

MICHAEL

And that would be?

SERAPHINE

It all hit me on the drive home. We still have a functioning vessel in you.

Beat. Good and long.

MICHAEL

Oh.

SERAPHINE

It's not an easy thing to ask- I know that. It's a heavy weight to bear alone but... but you can still bring him back to me. Do you see? You can still pay your penance.

MICHAEL

I am emptied... to be filled anew...

SERAPHINE

I cannot force you to do this. It has to be a choice.

MICHAEL

No- It's all right... I'm...

SERAPHINE

If you would let me, I think I could be a wonderful mother to you both.

Beat

MICHAEL

What if I refuse? I could find another. I could love again. I might...

SERAPHINE

Then why are you here at all?

MICHAEL

Because-

SERAPHINE

Because you already know nothing will compare. To be loved by one of David's kind is a beautiful thing. To be loved at all ought to be enough.

MICHAEL

I think I'm gonna be sick-

SERAPHINE swoops in and takes MICHAEL's face in her hands.

SERAPHINE

Oh no you're not. You're in love. Just look at you! You're so head-over-heels you practically glow with the stuff. I'd feel *honored* to do what you're about to do. This is historic, Michael. Can you appreciate that?

MICHAEL collapses into SERAPHINE. She welcomes his weight as they sink to the ground together.

This heavy heart. This suffering- this *hurt*. All of it can melt away if you let him take it from you. When we're through here, the light behind your eyes will be *his*. A perfect union of body and spirit. What's more romantic than that?

MICHAEL

But... then what's left of me?

SERAPHINE

You were nothing to begin with. And you won't care a lick once he's made himself comfortable. Look at me- you can do this.

MICHAEL

Promise?

SERAPHINE

On my life.

MICHAEL

Will it hurt?

SERAPHINE

Of course.

Beat

MICHAEL extends his pinkie. SERAPHINE takes it with her own and squeezes.

SERAPHINE

Good. Shall we finish this?

MICHAEL nods. They move to the Circles and kneel together.

SERAPHINE

Meet him on your hands and knees. It's a sign of respect.

MICHAEL

I... Sera, what if I can't / do this-

SERAPHINE

Enough. You will succeed or die. The choice is wholly yours. Think of it this way: it's the last choice you'll ever have to make. Come now... he's waiting.

SERAPHINE produces a small pair of gardening sheers from her overall pocket. Before MICHAEL can stop her, she opens them and draws the blade sharply across her palm.

MICHAEL

Don't! You could have used mine.

SERAPHINE

Out of the question. I've maimed my son's vessel enough. He won't tolerate another scratch.

She places her bloodied hand inside Wrath.

SERAPHINE

The rest is up to you.

MICHAEL closes his eyes and centers his breath.

MICHAEL

I bleed that I may be emptied. I am emptied that I may be filled anew. I am space. I am void. I am the womb. I bleed that I may be emptied. I am emptied that I may be filled- that I may- that I-

Beat

Avage ayer Dantalion on ca... Avage ayer Dantalion on ca... Avage ayer Dantalion-

A deep moan, followed by an explosion of light. Wrath drags MICHAEL in, kicking and screaming. He reaches the Circle's center and plunges downward as reality folds inward. The BUNKER becomes:

THE RIVER

MICHAEL emerges from the upstage brush. The DAVID OF WRATH is waiting for him in the water. The DAVID OF FEAR and DAVID OF DELIGHT watch from the downstage bank.

DAVID OF WRATH

You came back.

MICHAEL

Of course. I know what I am now.

DAVID OF WRATH

Does it change how you feel?

Beat

MICHAEL

I think... Your mother will be very happy to see you again. Even if you're wearing my face. And you'll be free... I can live with that.

DAVID OF WRATH

I never lied when I told you I loved you.

MICHAEL

I know... that's how I know this is okay. Good, even. Have you thought about what you want to do after you're... once I'm-

DAVID OF WRATH

I have.

Beat

MICHAEL

Will I still exist... after?

DAVID OF WRATH

Of course, love... but it's even better than that. Plainly *existing* is for the weak. The untouched and unloved of your miserable earth. We are going to become One. A spirit bonded. It's our grand reunion. I'm so proud of you, love. There's just... one last thing. One remaining path to re-tread.

MICHAEL

(Nodding) It's tonight, isn't it? That's why we're here. You die tonight.

DAVID OF WRATH

Afraid so...

MICHAEL

Okay.

DAVID OF WRATH

I love you.

They kiss.

Shall we remember together?

MICHAEL

No running?

DAVID OF WRATH

I couldn't even if I wanted to. I'll be with you the whole time.

MICHAEL

And then it will all be over.

Beat

Just... one question... the last one. Then I'm yours completely.

DAVID OF WRATH

Of course. Anything.

Beat

MICHAEL

What is your name? Really.

DAVID OF WRATH

An honest question deserves an honest answer. Evidence of my art can be traced throughout your human history. Search your tomes of antiquity. I am there. My name has graced the lips of nomadic shepherds as far back as the time of the Fertile Crescent. I have walked among your like in infinite guises. Sometimes men. Sometimes women. Sometimes neither. I studied at the foot of Hypatia before the sacking of the Great Library of Alexandria. King Solomon himself did bind me with seventy one of my brethren in a vessel of brass and guarded our power to influence and destroy with the kind of covetous heart that made even *me* blush at the time. My sigil has adorned the robes of Moorish sorcerers seeking to blind the Catholic Terror of their whereabouts, their magics. I have tasted the depths of earthly carnage on the fields of Agincourt, Gettysburg, and Waterloo. I have held the council of countless men and women who sought to master their respective universes. Beacons of conquest- *titans* even- that all, in turn, prostrated themselves before my true countenance.

MICHAEL

You still haven't answered my question.

DAVID OF WRATH

What- my name? Come on... you've been chanting it to open the way! Each and every time... to unlock the circles, sound the alarm... come on...

Beat

MICHAEL

Dantalion... you- your name... is Dantalion. You are...

DAVID OF WRATH

A Duke of Hell. A lesser Duke admittedly, but still. I do alright for myself. I found you, didn't I?

MICHAEL

How many others... demons? Devils? What do I even call you?

DAVID OF WRATH

More than you'd think. And just my name will do. It used to be the one mother assigned, but now it's the one I share with you.

MICHAEL

And... how many times have you done this, exactly? How many times have you... loved before? Conduits- or whatever you call them-

DAVID OF WRATH

Less than you'd think. I don't take many acolytes. At least, not as often as *some* of my colleagues. So imagine my surprise when I met you! *Finally*. What seemed a prison sentence in a body I didn't ask for... a mother I didn't choose... a life I never agreed to. All of it was finally *for* something. For you. (*Kissing MICHAEL's forehead*) You changed a shackle of flesh into divine providence. How did you do that?

MICHAEL

So this... this will make you happy?

DAVID OF WRATH

More than you could possibly conceive. It's a big commitment, but I'm ready and able if you are. So? What do you say?

MICHAEL

I think... I think I knew this was coming. In small ways- even before I met you. If there even was a time before. (*Tapping his own head*) Not much left to remember up here. You're all that's left.

DAVID OF WRATH

I hope you can find something purposeful in this. Sacred- even.

MICHAEL

Will it hurt?

DAVID OF WRATH

Me more than you... I still have to die tonight. Exactly as I did. We cannot be as one without the obliteration of the old flesh.

MICHAEL

But how could you want that?

DAVID OF WRATH

It's not a question of want, love. It's a question of gravity. I knew my time in this vessel was limited the moment I saw your eyes peering through the trees at me. But you still can't remember what you did... what you must do.

MICHAEL

See- that's the problem. How do you know that? How can I remember it all *except-*

DAVID OF WRATH

I thought it wise to grant you a mercy that you could move forward. I reached inside and scrubbed the spot clean. My last act, actually.

MICHAEL

You-

DAVID OF WRATH

Shh- it's alright. Start with what you can remember... tell me. Or them- if it helps.

MICHAEL

(To WITNESS) We- we...

DAVID OF WRATH

Breathe, love.

Beat

MICHAEL

(To WITNESS) We were here... *(To DAVID OF WRATH)* you had just asked me if I'd like to run away. You had a plan, everything mapped out to a tee...

DAVID OF WRATH

Good... what else?

MICHAEL

And... I can't... there's nothing-

DAVID OF WRATH

Let me help.

The DAVID OF WRATH presses his thumb to MICHAEL's forehead. MICHAEL's eyes roll back in his head as it all comes back. Beat.

MICHAEL

You... you asked me something. You said-

DAVID OF WRATH

If we could be together... *really* together forever, would you do it?

MICHAEL

(To WITNESS) I said yes. *(To DAVID OF WRATH)* Of course. Yes.

DAVID OF WRATH

There is a way. It will ask everything of you. More than you ever knew you could give. But it will be so *so* worth it in the end. What happened next?

MICHAEL
I... you took my hands.

DAVID OF WRATH
The DAVID OF WRATH does so.

DAVID OF WRATH
Beautiful, baby... what then?

MICHAEL
You were stroking my palms... reassuring me. I'd never felt safer in my whole life. Then-

DAVID OF WRATH
Do you like when I touch you, love?

MICHAEL
Yes...

DAVID OF WRATH
Yes *master*.

MICHAEL
Yes master. Then you asked me to kneel with you.

DAVID OF WRATH
They kneel.

DAVID OF WRATH
Ready?

MICHAEL
(*To WITNESS*) I didn't know what to make of that the first time. I thought he-

DAVID OF WRATH
Leave them, love. Their purpose is spent

Beat

MICHAEL
You can see them?

DAVID OF WRATH
See them? I sent them.

Beat

I command thirty six legions- I could spare the one.

MICHAEL begins to weep. The DAVID OF WRATH cradles his face and wipes the tears away.

DAVID OF WRATH

You are so beautiful when you cry. Have I ever told you that?

MICHAEL

David, *please*... take the memory again... I'm not ready to live with this. I'm not strong like you- I can't-

The DAVID OF WRATH licks the remaining tears away.

DAVID OF WRATH

Tastes ready enough to me...

The DAVID OF WRATH reaches into the water, procures a large river stone, and places it in MICHAEL's hands.

DAVID OF WRATH

Our sublime union will echo across the veil for centuries to come. Love me, Michael. It's really that simple.

Beat. MICHAEL drops the stone and stands.

MICHAEL

What exactly am I to you? Quickly.

DAVID OF WRATH

I don't-

MICHAEL

Body or soul? Vessel or-

DAVID OF WRATH

If you're trying to stall it won't-

MICHAEL

I left my father for you. I've killed for you-

DAVID OF WRATH

And how simpler things are now, no? Earthly ties are meant to be severed, love... I know it's difficult to understand from the prison of your own experience but I'm offering you paradise, here. Or- as close to it as a murderer will ever know.

MICHAEL

I'll never get to bury her...

DAVID OF WRATH

If it will lower your heart rate, I'll gladly see to her remains on your behalf. With your own hands.

MICHAEL

I- I'll never see my dad again... this is gonna destroy him- if it hasn't already!

DAVID OF FEAR

Let him go love.

DAVID OF DELIGHT

Let it all pass like weather.

DAVID OF WRATH

Your hesitation is understandably human. It's alright, love... it's all gonna be okay...

MICHAEL collapses. The three DAVID's encircle him, propping him up. The DAVID OF WRATH replaces the stone in MICHAEL's lap.

DAVID OF WRATH

Wrath is hard... I know, love... I know.

DAVID OF FEAR

But it has it's benefits. It's all relative when you think about it.

DAVID OF DELIGHT

Fear can be a snare.

DAVID OF FEAR

Delight, a weapon.

DAVID OF WRATH

Your wrath is a cleansing fire... let it loose, Michael. All of it. You're right. I lied. Punish me for it. I deserve your fury. I want it.

MICHAEL

I wish I'd never met you.

DAVID OF WRATH

That's the spirit- follow that. If you love me...

DAVID OF WRATH/DAVID OF
DELIGHT/DAVID OF FEAR

...you will do this.

The DAVID OF WRATH lays his head in MICHAEL's lap. MICHAEL gathers himself.

DAVID OF WRATH

I'm right here.

DAVID OF DELIGHT

No running.

DAVID OF FEAR

You're so close, love.

DAVID OF WRATH/DAVID OF
DELIGHT/DAVID OF FEAR

You are the single greatest thing that has ever happened to me.

Beat

MICHAEL

I love you too.

MICHAEL picks up the stone.

DAVID OF WRATH

It'll be over before you know it. Take a life to give new life. *Host* new life. Balance restored.

MICHAEL

(To WITNESS) Do you hate me yet?

The DAVID OF WRATH's arms shoot into the air and seize MICHAEL's arms by invisible strings. MICHAEL lurches, raising the stone high above his head.

Forgive me...

MICHAEL

The DAVID OF WRATH drives MICHAEL's arms down. The stone cracks bone and reality shudders. The DAVID OF WRATH continues to force MICHAEL's arms through blow after blow until his brain can no longer support motor function. The DAVID OF FEAR and DAVID OF DELIGHT take over then, grasping MICHAEL's arms and slamming them down. Again, again, again, again, again, again, again. MICHAEL sobs as the head of the DAVID OF WRATH is reduced to pulp. When it is done, MICHAEL drops the stone and collapses into the waiting arms of the DAVID OF FEAR and DAVID OF DELIGHT.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry... I'm sorry / I'm so sorry- I'm-

DAVID OF FEAR

Beautiful!

DAVID OF DELIGHT

Well done, love!

MICHAEL, bereft and incoherent, tries to crawl away from the two Davids. They follow.

DAVID OF FEAR

It's coming! Listen!

DAVID OF DELIGHT

The *ascent*... the breathless rise... well done, love-

A sound like million wings unfurling at once fills the space. A sublime cacophony. The river runs dry, the sun burns out. Then, from above, a thin beam of white light pierces the top of MICHAEL's head. His eyes roll with sudden pleasure.

MICHAEL

Wha-... what is this...

DAVID OF DELIGHT

The final crossing.

DAVID OF FEAR

The Circle of Mercy.

DAVID OF DELIGHT

It's ours if you want it. All of me...

DAVID OF FEAR

...for all of time.

DAVID OF DELIGHT

Further down than any mortal has dared venture before...

MICHAEL

I... yes...

The DAVID OF FEAR and DAVID OF DELIGHT grip the back of MICHAEL's neck and guide his face down to what used to be the DAVID OF WRATH's head. The two remaining David's exchange a look of triumph before pressing MICHAEL's face into the bloody mass. Immediately, MICHAEL's body erupts into violent convulsions. The two David's hold fast. MICHAEL releases a final muffled howl before reality collapses. THE RIVER becomes:

THE BUNKER.

MICHAEL re-emerges from the Circles. He surveys his surroundings with great care. His body... his company. SERAPHINE takes a tentative step forwards.

SERAPHINE

Son? Is that-

With a flick of MICHAEL's wrist, SERAPHINE is flung backwards like a rag doll. She crumples against the upstage wall as MICHAEL steps out of the Circles, which fall dark behind him.

MICHAEL

Hello, mother.

SERAPHINE

My love... it's y-

MICHAEL clenches his fist and SERAPHINE's voice is cut short. She claws at her throat, suffocating slowly.

MICHAEL

You afforded me shelter... food, clothes... a kind of love. Something of a childhood. And, most of all, you afforded me the chance to find love. For that... thank you.

SERAPHINE reaches up to touch her son's face.

MICHAEL

But I never asked to be born, you presumptuous witch.

MICHAEL rips his fist back and SERAPHINE's throat explodes. She gives a final, sputtering wheeze... and lies still. MICHAEL kneels beside her corpse and brushes the hair from her face. BECCA materializes from the shadows, hauling the bloody sack.

BECCA

All done?

MICHAEL stands.

MICHAEL

The vessel is filled anew. We're through here.

BECCA

Whoa... I thought you were just talking a big game.

MICHAEL

Yeah- well... get to know me. I'm fantastic.

BECCA

Whoever- *whatever* you are, those hands still owe my body a burial.

BECCA drops the sack at MICHAEL's feet.

I'm going to decompose with purpose. I'm going to feed the earth.

Beat

MICHAEL

There's no rest, you know. Beyond. It's nothing like you're expecting.

BECCA

Whatever. It has to be better than this. Michael... I mean- what do I even call you now?

MICHAEL

You? Nothing. You're not long for this world. I mean- none of us are but *you* especially-

BECCA

I only mean... (*approaching*) you in there, killer?

MICHAEL

He is within. Give him his peace. The sooner you disincorporate the more at ease he will feel.

BECCA

Can you feel him? Inside?

MICHAEL

I feel everything Michael feels as Michael feels all of me all at once all the time. Our love is a two-way street...

BECCA

Cool. Sounds... intense. But his work isn't done here. You're work isn't done.

MICHAEL

Of course. It's the least we can do. And I owe you my thanks besides. You kept him company. You comforted him... even as you are now. He never told you it helped but I can feel it.

BECCA

I... that's...

MICHAEL

He says... but then again, no... it's quite faint. (*Tapping his head*) Something nice, I'm sure.

Beat

BECCA

I guess this is goodbye, then...

MICHAEL

Do you mean for me? Or for him?

BECCA

Both, I guess. Could I say something... to him? Before I go.

Beat

You... Michael... I didn't pull you out in time. That's on me. The hurt you gave me- the pain you trailed behind you? That's on you- every last mistake, lie, and betrayal. I absolve you for *none* of this but-... still... I'm sorry I couldn't save you.

Beat

Okay... going up?

MICHAEL

Only place left...

MICHAEL considers the stairs as BECCA fades away. He gathers her remains and lingers at the edge of the Circles for just a moment before turning downstage and speaking with the simultaneous voices of MICHAEL, The DAVID OF FEAR, the DAVID OF DELIGHT, and THE DAVID OF WRATH.

MICHAEL

(To WITNESS) Thank you.

MICHAEL considers his companion a moment longer, then departs. When he opens the cellar door, sunlight floods inside. MICHAEL shields his face against the onslaught but comes to smile, basking in the warmth on that final step. When he goes, he closes the door behind him. Seraphine's blood pools on the floor. Water drips from the walls. MICHAEL turns out the lights.

END OF PLAY.