

**Characters:**

<b>Mariando</b>	a woman, fifty or so, formerly Marie
<b>Mouth</b>	a mouth, The Stranger
<b>Hood</b>	a talking lump, The Becoming Subject
<b>Undergrad 1</b>	a female student
<b>Undergrad 2</b>	a female student of Chinese descent
<b>Voice</b>	a voice – whose is as yet undetermined

**Location:**

**The Library Toilets**

This scene immediately follows on from Scene 6: a dinner party at the home of The Host. We begin with Marie, now Mariando, leaving the house; the front door a portal between episodes.

The name change – Marie to Mariando – is significant, and with it, her whole physicality changes. Frozen for a moment with hand still on the door-handle, she gives us time to take her in. She’s aged by twenty or thirty years. Her clothes, too, or at least her style, is more hodgepodge, more rag-bag than before; less consciously *Weekend Magazine* and more uncaring; practical, yet still with a kookiness clearly shorthand for \*creative\* or \*arty\*: trainers; dark blue jogging bottoms, flared, with fluorescent orange stripes down the sides; quilted sleeping-bag jacket; a surfeit of wool and purple.

As she closes the door behind her, or at least makes the action to, the former scene is at once ruptured, walls crumbling and backdrop collapsing like a set made up of sodden cardboard or crumbling biscuits. In the interstices of the flickering motion sensor lighting, now tensely coming on, we are transported in time and place – not the stoop to the home of The Host, but to somewhere else entirely: a lavatory cubicle. Laminate wood-look paneling, brushed steel fixtures, downlights, etcetera. Miniature writing in the grouting. The lighting is low, green-yellow, and there is a hum of air being sucked out. The space is impossibly vast.

The Library toilets.

Mariando enters, closes the door behind her, slides the lock, flips down the toilet lid, and sits. Moments later she starts to weep, quietly. As she does, we notice a small amount of blood dripping from a nick under her chin and onto her collar, turning her cotton roll-neck from green to brown. The blood is from a small cut made by a knife from a scene deleted between this and the dinner party at the home of The Host (see Scene 6).<sup>☞</sup>

She inhales hard through her nose, as if at last in resolve. But her eyes tell us instead she is smelling the air, enjoying the ammonia and sweetened vapors, a reminder of... what? Sex? Teenage masturbation?

Mariando is oblivious to the characters who now appear in the cubicle with her: the Hood perched upon her right shoulder, and the Mouth whom flickers large, covering her face entirely.

**Mouth**

Hah-uh guh-ch IK hee-urh? (How does IT feel?)

*[Long pause. Then again, exactly the same, as if a tape-recording]*

Hah-uh guh-ch IK hee-urh? (How does IT feel?)

**Hood**

How do I feel, you mean?

**Mouth**

Ih-ch IK hike-ch. Hee-yech, oh koh-och (If IT likes. Yes, of course.)

**Hood**

*[Ignoring the slight]*

I'll tell you how *IT* feels. *IT* feels...

*[Pause. Then, suddenly wistful]*

IT feels... Solid.

**Mouth**

*[Flatly]*

Ch-hoh-hih-g. (Solid.)

**Hood**

Why not? 'S a-good-a-word as any?

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☞ This scene, Scene X-Acto, an as yet and possibly forever unwritten Coda to the whole project, features the entire cast stood facing one another round a circle-section of cream-coloured carpet. Each character has in their hand a knife, all different and moving up in scale from butter, fruit, table, and chef's knife, through to meat cleaver and twin-blade electric carving knife. The anatomy of the blade, the grind, the cutting edge – even the butt – serves to intensify their language as they speak, sharpening their true intentions to the point of puncturing. Here, even the smallest, most benign remark can draw blood from one's interlocutor, and speaking self-reflexively can see the blade turning on oneself, hara-kiri-style. Here, making a point is murderous.

## Mouth

Ing hoh-k hengch, 'ch-hoh-hih-g'? (In what sense, 'solid'?)

## Hood

What d'you mean, 'in what sense'? In *the* sense. The *only* sense.

Solid. You know, solid, as in not hollow nor hole, but whole?

## Mouth

*[Unconvinced]*

Ee-yeh-ch...? (Yes...?)

## Hood

*[Resolute]*

Right...If you were to cut me in two, ok? with one of those, em, those...I'm telling you, you'd be hard pressed to find any space at all, no gaps, nothing between my, um...my...just uninterrupted, unstratified matter. Grey. Cold and consistent, yes? Like a butter ball.

*[Short pause]*

Well no, no, I, em...No...

*[Irritated, suddenly picking up pace and speaking, it seems, to no-one in particular]*

To *you* perhaps, that's how I'd feel. Cold and wet. To *you* perhaps. That's *your* hand. *Your* impression. *Your* sticky digits probing like a poking...um...person...em – Teenager! And... You'll take me away with you on your fingers, y'know? With those fingers, you'll...um... you could...

*[Tails off. Then, threatening]*

Don't you *dare* give me the eyes, or I, I –

## Mouth

*[Gently interrupting, challenging]*

Hoh-heh – Oh-k hang-ch? Hoo-ch-k hing-urch? (Sorry – What hands? Whose fingers?)

## Hood

*[Not letting up]*

Ok, ok...what I *mean* is... Take this mark, ok? this, this hole in ITs...

*[Quickly correcting]*

– in my, in *my* side. Any of them. One of a thousand indexes. Without arms, without hands or fingers, how would I know its dip? (Pit-pock.) Without eyes, how would I know in shadows its depth? But still, I *feel* them, yes? these moon maria. And how do I...um...how do I *feel* them? I *know* I do, I *know*. I know them in the oscillating pressures of the air, I think. Or rather, I *am* the oscillations in the air, yes? I am the clutter in the room. The room itself. Fired clay. Architectures in space...Yes, yes, yes, I am...

*[Exaggerated pause, then slowing, measured]*

I am...a cathedral, horizontal, with its spire between the teeth, raised and razed, time and time, with the quickening and quieting of the tongue, and ultimately...the, um –

**Mouth**

*[Speaking over]*

Ng-aye-ch hurg-ch. (Nice words.)

**Hood**

...removal of ITs mouth by ITs father.

**Mouth**

▪ (▪)

**Hood**

*[Pause]*

Pound. Y'know? Wanjina? The Big Talker? The Big Mouth? Filled the world with ITs clattering trap, apparently. Just blurbled, all day long...

*[Sing-song]*

La-la-la-la, Potis, la-la-la, Egg-Pirate, la-la-la, Doorsack, la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-labeling, and all that fluff and all those ornaments and in the end it was *ITs* mouth that was filled, *ITs* mouth that was stuffed with crumbs and stitched up and smoothed over and sanded down to keep more and more stuff from coming out, and out, and out. What bullshit, hey? and all for the sake of a little more room.

**Mouth**

Ee-yeh-ch. (Yes.)

This interchange is interrupted by the sudden sound of the heavy door to the toilets opening. A shard of yellow light appears on the ceiling, quickly widening then narrowing again. Two voices come spilling in followed by the girls themselves, students, undergrads whom we cannot see but only hear and in mid-conversation.

**Undergrad 1**

...but you're not typical Chinese though, right?

**Undergrad 2**

Whadaya mean? I wear glasses.

**Undergrad 1**

No, but you're tall and you don't have...I mean you don't look...I mean, Chinese are very, y'know...and your not, are you? You're very fair and you don't have...

*[Pause]*

D'youknowwhaddamean?

The conversation continues above the sound of thin doors opening and closing, locks sliding, and the rustling of fabric. The two girls obviously stepping into their cubicles.

**Undergrad 2**

*[With bare irony]*

– I guess I don't have the slanty eyes.

**Undergrad 1**

*[Quickly quelling the offence]*

But you're smart, right?

**Undergrad 2**

Well, I'm studying Law at <noise> University, so I guess I'm kind of...

**Undergrad 1**

There you go!

They laugh, nervously. There follows a silence for an uncomfortable length of time, interrupted only by the odd cough, or clearing of the throat: the girls contriving to break the tension. Then...

**Undergrad 1**

Who's that guy at the temple party? The other ginger guy.  
Not Sam Baxter.

**Undergrad 2**

Josh Hunter?

**Undergrad 1**

Yeah, Josh Hunter.

**Mouth**

*[Unheard by the two students]*

Goch. Hung-kuh. (Josh Hunter).

**Undergrad 2**

*[Teasing]*

Why?

**Undergrad 1**

Oh no, no, nothing. I was just speaking to him, 'sall.  
I told him he smelled nice.

*[Beat]*

And he was telling me about the stall he works at on a Sunday.  
They sell squirrel meat, apparently.

**Undergrad 2**

*[Incredulous]*

Really? Ugh!

**Undergrad 1**

*[Laughing]*

I know! Apparently they work with the Forestry Commission. He was telling me, they trap the greys in cages, apparently, then they shoot them in the head, and apparently they just fall apart when you skin them, cause their bones are like bird bones. Really brittle. And there's nothing much on 'em either. But he says they taste not bad though, apparently. Just like dark meat on a chicken. They sell them in pies...

A toilet flush, quickly followed by another. More noise in haste: doors, taps, hand-driers, etcetera. The voices continue.

**Undergrad 2**

– How'd they kill them again?

**Undergrad 1**

O yeah...they catch them in a cage trap, right?

**Undergrad 2**

Yeah...?

**Undergrad 1**

– then they shoot them in the head.

The toilet door swings again and through it out go the two voices, rapidly growing fainter.

**Undergrad 2**

*[Laughing]*

Jeez.

**Undergrad 1**

I know!

*[Silence]*

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**Hood**

*[In a low burr, Richard-Burton-esque]*

The muddled animal meat of a porkpie  
Crusted over with peach puckered lips.  
I am the voice, the voice that does vivify  
IT: a Hood for a talking polyp

Or a grey cricket in top-hat-and-tails, shy  
Upon a shoulder, giving counsel  
To Mariando's ear, the same shape and size  
As I, too, scabbled into oval

*[Beat]*

A chip on a shoulder. A chip on a shoulder *success* of shoulder.

*[Beat]*

I mean, IT *is* the shoulder, y'see? / am the shoulder. The chip; the shoulder: same-same, y'see? The lump of meat, the pastry, the mouth, yes? ITs voice, yes? An amice that reveals ITs form, that brings to life or shape, that shapes, that sees the shape of voice and form of the thing, of IT, and becomes a thing, a wooden boy...a cut of meat lapidified...

**Mouth**

Ee-yeh-ch? (Yes?)

**Hood**

Lapidified. Lapidified. Lapidify: To turn into stone.

**Mouth**

*[Satisfied]*

Aaah! (Aaah!)

**Hood**

*[Long Pause. Then, changing tack]*

Look at her.

**Mouth**

Ee-yeh-ch? (Yes?)

**Hood**

*[Imploring]*

Look at her! So sad. So...I wonder...Can she see me, out the corner of her eye? Can she? I've so long incanted around her head that she might, too, somehow lump up and turn to stone.

*[Pause]*

LAP-ID-IFY.

*[Clears throat in preparation]*

Huh-um.

*[Then, exaggerated, as if conjuring a spell]*

Ossify <sup>☞</sup>

Calcify <sup>☞</sup>

Chondrify <sup>✓</sup>

Casefy <sup>✓</sup>

Lignify <sup>×</sup>

Saponify <sup>\*</sup>

Saccharify <sup>x</sup>

Acetify <sup>\*</sup>

That ear and I, that mouth and I, that putrefy, etceterify...and then –

ZAM!

*[Long pause]*

Why is she crying, d'you think?

**Mouth**

Aye hoh-ng-k ng-o. Huch? Hu-yee-gek? Ing-urh-ey? Hoo ng-oh-ch  
(I don't know. Love? Regret? Injury? Who knows.)

- 
- ☞ turn into bone
  - ☞ turn into calcium carbonate
  - ✓ turn into cartilage
  - ✓ turn into cheese
  - ×
  - ×
  - ×
  - ×
  - ×
  - ×

**Hood**

Yes, she's bleeding too, d'you see?

**Mouth**

Ee-yeh-ch. (Yes.)

**Hood**

How does IT feel?

*[Silence]*

I'm saying, 'How does IT feel?' Do you hear me?

**Mouth**

Yech, Aye hee-urh. Ha-urh guh-ch IK hee-urh.

Hah-uh ng-uh-ch *huh* hee-urh?

(Yes, I hear: 'How does IT feel?'. How does *what* feel?)

**Hood**

The blood. The chin. The blood. How does *IT* feel?

There is a gentle knocking on the cubicle door and with it, the Mouth suddenly vanishes, diminishing into a dot at the centre of Mariando's face. The Hood too has disappeared leaving Mariando alone in the cubicle. She wipes each eye with a forefinger and sighs.

**Voice**

*[Quietly, tentatively]*

Mariando?

*[Pause]*

Mariando, I know you're in there.

*[Pause]*

Mariando, it's me. Can you come out? Or...

Can I come in? Marie?

Mariando slowly stands and walks the long distance to the cubicle door, her trainers squeaking on the linoleum. She reaches the door, slides the lock and opens it, just a fraction, though not enough for us to see whom the VOICE belongs to, just yet.

**Voice**

*[A whisper, almost inaudible]*

God, Marie, d'you know you're bleeding?

Fade to black.

In the darkness, an electric BONG sounds from somewhere high up on the toilet wall. The library's PA system. Then music: Puccini's *O Mio Babbino Caro*, real slow. A lunette of light at the centre of the stage. A sun, orange with a halo of coral red. The Mouth. It wraps each sluggish word in turbulent air.

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### **Mouth**

Oh hye heh-huh-hih <noise>  
(Oh my beloved <noise>)  
He ih ho hang-hung, he ih ho hang-hung  
(he is so handsome, he is so handsome.)  
Aye-uh go hoo huh hoo-huh  
(I'll go to the jeweler)  
Hoh guy hahr heh-ging hing.  
(To buy our wedding ring.)

Ho yech, aye hee-hee huch hing.  
(Oh yes, I really love him.)  
Ang ih-ch g-yoo hih-oh ch-hay ng-o,  
(And if you still say no)  
Aye-urh go hoo huh Harch-haw Hig-ch  
(I'll go to the Falshaw Bridge)  
Ang hoh hye-heh-ch heh-hoh.  
(And throw myself below.)

Hye huch, horh ho-ik-ch aye huh-hurh,  
(My love, for which I suffer,)  
Ak hach-k! Aye hong-k huh hi.  
(At last! I want to die.)  
O <noise> hach hich-kay, hach hich-kay.  
(O <noise> have pity, have pity.)  
O <noise> hach hich-kay, hach hich-kay.  
(O <noise> have pity, have pity.)

*[Long pause]*

END