

CASSANDRA 'S LABYRINTH

Original Screenplay

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Rough/First Draft

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OVER BLACK - POSSIBLY CREDITS

SUE (V.O.)
(reading a letter)
Dear Cassandra. I'm writing to you
today seeking guidance on an
immensely complicated situation.

INT. CASSANDRA'S HOUSE - DAY

The house is a haven of order and tranquility: bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, living room, a Psychologist's consulting area, potted plants... a puzzle in progress on the floor...

SUE (V.O.)
My name is Sue. I'm in my 40s, married
and mother to two wonderful adult
children. Over the past year, I've met
someone and we've been seeing each
other regularly. We deeply love each
other, and we're both wrestling with a
great amount of guilt. I loathe the
idea of cheating and lying - to my
family and to myself. This ongoing
deceit is taking a toll on my well-
being. I understand that sometimes our
hearts' compass doesn't point in the
direction reason suggests.

HOME-OFFICE AREA - CONTINUOUS

CASSANDRA HAYES, elegant early-30s, sits at her computer, reading. The inherent approachability and trustworthiness she exudes invites trust at a glance.

SUE (V.O.)
I know there is no perfect answer, but
I'd welcome any guidance or insights
you might offer. How to make a decision
that respects everyone involved,
including myself? Sincerely. Sue

Cassandra starts answering the letter.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)
Dear Sue. Life often puts us at
crossroads where our hearts and minds
pull us in different directions.

Bookshelves line the walls behind her, filled with psychology textbooks and trinkets. A volume of Confucius stands out.

The DOORBELL chimes. Cassandra leaves to answer it.

A moment, then a cryptic email with a picture of a message composed with cutout letters pops on her screen with a DING: 'STILL WAITING FOR YOU!'

VESTIBULE - CONTINUOUS

Cassandra opens the door to WILLIAM, 16, slim and shy.

CASSANDRA
Hello, William.

WILLIAM
Good morning... Doctor.

CASSANDRA
Come in and close the door.
(on her way to kitchen)
Have you eaten?

WILLIAM
Yes, thank you.

He closes the door methodically and follows her in.

CASSANDRA (O.S.)
Juice? I just made some fresh orange.

CONSULTING AREA - CONTINUOUS

The décor is designed to create a calming aura. William, not sure whether he should sit or wait standing, finally sits.

Cassandra comes back with a glass of orange juice for him, sits by her gueridon.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
How was school?

WILLIAM
(as if he touched embers)
It was good this week. Teacher said to keep it up.

CASSANDRA
Are you going to keep it up?

WILLIAM
I hope so.

CASSANDRA

Why? Why do you hope to keep it up?

He looks tortured after each of her questions, but quickly finds his grounds and takes a chance.

WILLIAM

(tentatively)

It's in my interest?

CASSANDRA

(smiles at him)

You are a beautiful, smart young man. Your future is in your hands. You have to forge it. - You! - You, have to build it to the best of your ability and that starts now. While you can. Later might be too late.

As she spoke, he looked at her, both embarrassed and somehow aware of the stakes.

HOME-OFFICE AREA - LATER

Cassandra returns to her desk to finish her letter and sees the message on her screen: 'STILL WAITING FOR YOU!'

Her eyebrows knit in confusion. She sits down, re-reads the message, trying to discern its meaning.

She closes the email, drags it onto a folder labeled 'Anonymous', and resumes responding to Sue.

Her tense features betray her inner turmoil.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)

Emotions, no matter how inconvenient, are genuine and valid. However, our feelings, while important, are only a facet of the choices we make.

As the tension grows, her typing speed increases. The sound of the KEYS aggressively hit starts to resonate. Even her own voice sounds like a far away echo to her and her unease keeps growing as she finishes the letter.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)

Finding the right path will feel like finding your way through a labyrinth, but you must proceed with empathy and respect for everyone involved. Sending strength your way, Cassandra.

FLASHBACK - EXT. AMELIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

YOUNGER Cassandra, late 20s, is driving to Amelia's house. There is an ambulance and a police car with swirling lights spinning colored beams on the house and a small crowd.

Cassandra, bottling her panic, gets out of her car and walks briskly toward the house. A uniform OFFICER bars her way. She backs off a few steps and shouts a name, frantic.

CASSANDRA
Amelia!! -- Ameliaaaa!!

HONOR BENNETT, Amelia's distraught mother, late 50s, opens a window and calls, her face soaked in tears.

HONOR
Cass! ... Cassandra!
(to Officer)
Please, let her through.

Cassandra, frozen with worry for a moment, darts to the door as two MEDICS push a gurney into the house.

FLASHBACK - INT. CHURCH - DAY

AMELIA, late 20s, lies in repose in her open casket.

YOUNGER Cassandra sits on the family pew, holding Honor in her arms. Both are expressionless; no tears left in them.

PRESENT - INT. CASSANDRA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra lies restless, eyes wide open. She tosses and turns angrily trying to repel the thoughts creeping in.

FLASHBACK - INT. PUB - NIGHT

The place is packed and the atmosphere festive. Most REVELERS are well imbibed.

Amelia is engaged in a conversation with a BIG GUY who seems obviously taken by her.

AMELIA
...and I'll soon open my own pottery
studio. Already found the place.

YOUNGER Cassandra, standing next to her, gently drags her away. Amelia doesn't resist and follows.

CASSANDRA
We should go, it's getting late.

They stop at the bar to drop their empty glasses. Another man approaches them. He is short and bulky. Not quite the type any of these ladies would take home. This is DANNY BARNES, about their age.

DANNY
(smiling wide)
You guys are the life of the party.

CASSANDRA
Thank you, Danny. We're actually about to leave.

AMELIA
Noooo... Come on, just a bit longer.

DANNY
Listen to your friend, Cass... I'd love to buy you guys a drink.

He signals the bartender to bring another round.

CASSANDRA
Danny... you're sweet as pie, but I do have to go home.

AMELIA
Plllleaase... just for a little bit then we'll go. Promise.
(raises her right hand)
Smash me if I lie!

The Bartender brings the beers. Amelia grabs one while Cassandra indicates she doesn't want any.

CASSANDRA
I really have to go.

AMELIA
I'll drink it.
(to Danny)
We'll share!

Cassandra reluctantly gives her a peck on the cheek.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
Call you later. And don't go berserk about it... keep your hair on, okay?

On her way out, Cassandra turns, only to catch Danny's lingering gaze on her. Her face drops but she keeps walking.

PRESENT - INT. CASSANDRA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra bolts up from her nightmare, very tense. A beat, then she gets up.

On the moonlit dresser, a photo of herself with Amelia, next to another photo with her mother, ELIZABETH.

PRESENT - INT. CASSANDRA'S OFFICE AREA - NIGHT

The 'STILL WAITING...' message looms large on the computer screen.

Cassandra, arms crossed, stares at it intently, as if trying to get inside of it.

FLASHBACK - INT. HAYES' HOUSE - NIGHT

YOUNGER Cassandra sneaks quietly into the house after the party. Lights suddenly flick on, stopping her on her track.

Her mother, ELIZABETH, late 50s, in a night gown and wrapped in a colorful shawl, stands by the light switch.

ELIZABETH

(flat tone)

I was expecting you earlier. I
couldn't sleep, it's too hot.

CASSANDRA

(casual)

It's not that late, Mom - and it's
not that hot either.

(beat)

Want a glass of milk? - I'll warm
one up for you.

ELIZABETH

Naaah, I'll just try again. - How
was your evening?

CASSANDRA

Banal. Had a bit of fun though. You
sure you don't want me to get you
something?

Elizabeth waves her hand dismissively.

ELIZABETH
I'm fine. Go to bed. I'll try to do
the same.

FLASHBACK - INT. CASSANDRA'S BEDROOM / HAYES' HOUSE - NIGHT

It's later into the night. All is quiet. YOUNGER Cassandra, deep in her sleep, is jolted awake by the PHONE ring. She feels around, fishing for the phone.

CASSANDRA
Yes?

FLASHBACK - INT. EMERGENCY ROOM / HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Amelia, in a hospital gown, looks at her, haggard, her eyes welling with tears over her bloodied, tumefied face. Her lip is cut and bleeding.

YOUNGER Cassandra freezes, flabbergasted, unbelieving what she sees. Honor stands next to her, in tears.

Amelia reaches for them, but they are not allowed closer. Nurses are tending to her wounds. One of them takes pictures of the bruises on her face and arms.

Honor watches in distress, hands clasped.

Another NURSE comes in with a rape examination kit.

NURSE
(to Honor)
Sorry, we don't have rooms for her
right now. We are swamped.

She draws the curtain.

HONOR
(crying)
Why did you leave her? Why didn't
you take her with you?

They fall in each other's arms.

PRESENT - INT. CASSANDRA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra is collapsed onto her couch, head between her knees, the weight of the world on her shoulders. She is a silhouette against the dim lit room, swinging her body back and forth. The camera slowly MOVES TIGHT on her, pressing.

PRESENT - INT. CASSANDRA'S OFFICE AREA - MORNING

The soft instrumental MUSIC playing in the background adds to the tranquil ambiance.

Cassandra sits across from another patient, ELLEN, in her 30s. Cassandra listens intently.

ELLEN

I'm stuck in a loop, holding onto this anger... and it's crushing me.

CASSANDRA

What do you feel you should do next?

ELLEN

Maybe it's time I let go. It's time I forgive... For my sake, not his.

CASSANDRA

Forgiveness is a journey, not a destination. But you've already started walking.

Ellen nods, tears forming in her eyes. She stands up. Cassandra offers a reassuring smile and gets up.

ELLEN

Thank you. I'll see you next week?

FLASHBACK - INT. AMELIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Amelia's facial wounds are healing, but she is still an emotional wreck. YOUNGER Cassandra sits next to her on the bed, consoling her.

CASSANDRA

You should get out of the house...
Clear your mind. - How about you
teach me how to rollerblade?

(fired up at the idea)

Huh? Why not?! Finally!

She laughs. Amelia tries to join in, but her laughter is quickly drowned in a burst of tears. Cassandra hugs her. They stay like that for a bit.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

How about I pick you up tomorrow
evening and we go try that Korean
restaurant you told me about?

Amelia doesn't respond. A beat.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
I have to go. I have class, then I
have an all-nighter at **'the hospital'**.

Amelia pulls away, sniffing.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
So what do you say? Pick you up
tomorrow around seven?

Amelia weakly nods.

FLASHBACK - EXT. AMELIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

YOUNGER Cassandra stands in front of Amelia's house, frantic.

CASSANDRA
(*shouting*)
Amelia!! -- Ameliaaaa!!

FLASHBACK - INT. AMELIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A doctor helps Honor to the bed. YOUNGER Cassandra barges into the crowded room, they won't let her further. She forces her way to the bathroom and sees...

...Amelia, lifeless, bathing in blood-red water.

Cassandra, petrified... stares. All around her goes silent. Only the DRIPPING faucet hammers the silence. Loud. Louder.

PRESENT - INT. CASSANDRA'S OFFICE AREA - DUSK

It's almost dark. Cassandra sits at her desk, phone in hand.

The cryptic message ever so big on her computer screen.

CASSANDRA
(*into phone*)
Hey, Mom... it's me... I'd like to
come home for a little while.
(*pauses, listening*)
No, I'm fine. Just something I need
to do.
(*pause*)
Yeah. The end of the week. Probably
Saturday... would that be alright?

As she speaks, we gradually...

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HAYES' HOUSE - DAY

Cassandra enters, rolling her suitcase behind her. Aging furniture and framed family photographs adorn the walls. The soft hum of a TELEVISION show can be heard in the background.

ELIZABETH (V.O.)

Cassie, that you?... I'm in here!

Cassandra looks around, letting her memories of the place, the scents of home, fill her with comfort.

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Elizabeth, more gray-haired, worn face, sits in a recliner, wrapped in her colorful shawl. Her reading glasses perched on her nose, she looks up from the magazine she's reading.

ELIZABETH

There you are. Wasn't sure when you'd show up.

CASSANDRA

Traffic was a nightmare. But I'm here now.

Elizabeth pats the seat next to her. Cassandra goes in, parks her suitcase, gives her mom a peck on the cheek and sits. There is palpable tension and an unspoken distance between them that they both try to circumvent.

ELIZABETH

I've been worried about you, Cassie. You sounded... distant on the phone.

CASSANDRA

I'm fine, Mom. Just a lot on my plate lately.

ELIZABETH

(not buying it)

You always have a lot on your mind. But this is different. I know it is.

Cassandra flinches slightly, takes a moment.

CASSANDRA

It's complicated. - There is someone I need to find. - I don't know who. Or why, for that matter.

ELIZABETH

Are you in some kind of trouble?