

FIRST MOVE

FOURTH MOVE

SEVENTH MOVE

SECOND MOVE

FIFTH MOVE

EIGHTH MOVE

THIRD MOVE

SIXTH MOVE



## CHARACTERS

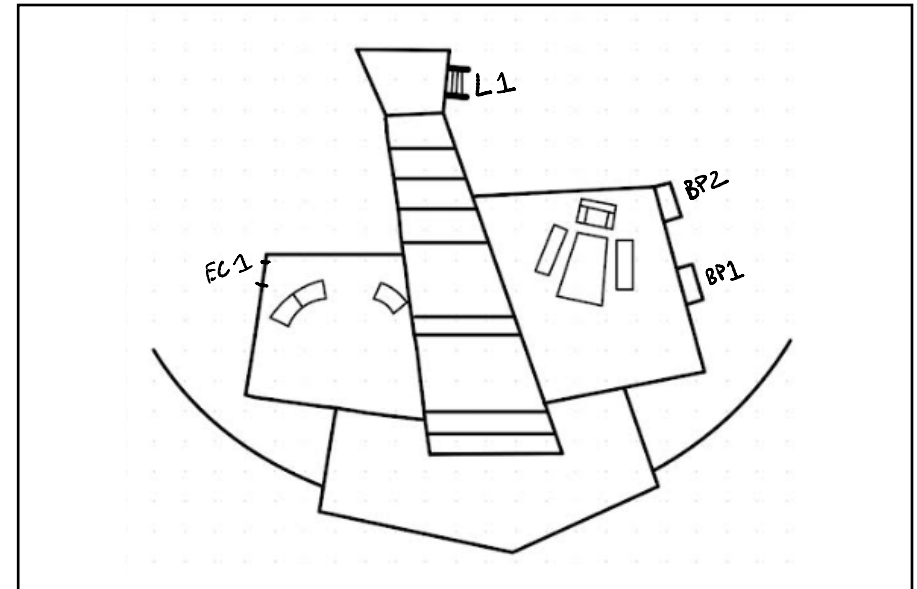
- (E) **ELIZABETH SAWYER** – (female, forties/fifties/sixties) An outcast.
- (S) **SCRATCH** – (male, twenties/early thirties) The devil.
- (A) **SIR ARTHUR BANKS** – (male, fifties/sixties) A wealthy and powerful man.
- (C) **CUDDY BANKS** – (male, twenties/early thirties) Sir Arthur's son, painfully shy, a Morris dancer. He is secretly in love with Frank (and also in hate).
- (F) **FRANK THORNEY** – (male, twenties/early thirties) A confident and successful young man, charming and ruthless. His ambition knows no bounds.
- (W) **WINNIFRED** – (female, twenties/early thirties) Sir Arthur's servant, resigned and pragmatic, secretly married to Frank.

## SETTING

The Village of Edmonton: a semi-rural small town lost in the country.

## TIME

Then-ish. But equally of our moment. No faux-period accents, please.



↓ = sit down

↑ = stand up

↘ = down stairs

↗ = up stairs

X = crosses

⇓ = down ladder

⇑ = up ladder

ENT BP2  
EXT BP2

ENT BP1  
EXT BP1

ENT EC1  
EXT EC1

ENT L1  
EXT L1

G For Winnifred, <sup>around</sup> table

6.

(ELIZABETH's cottage. Later. Day.) 1(E)/(S)

(SCRATCH is back. A little jittery, just arrived.)

SCRATCH. I thought it would help if you could sort of -- see what you're getting. All the services provided.

ELIZABETH. I said No.

SCRATCH. Yes but you see  
the thing is  
nobody says No.

ELIZABETH. I did. 2(S)

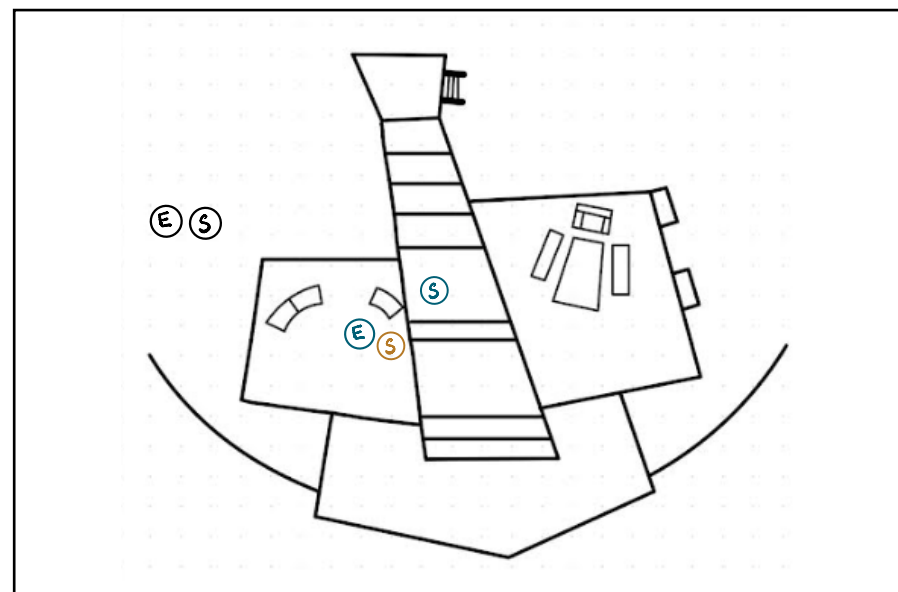
SCRATCH. But that's because you don't understand the value of the offer. I don't want to boast, but I've only been doing this a few hundred years and yet I recently got a promotion, and honestly? The secret to my success is authenticity. My offer is authentic. It is detailed and it is authentic and people are statistically, authentically happy when they work with me.

ELIZABETH. How experienced are you?

SCRATCH. I'm *fast-rising*. If you want to get detailed, my year-end numbers are better (across the board) than my senior colleagues', and my customer satisfaction is generally a good seven to ten points higher. If you heard me out, you might be surprised.

(A moment. Has he scored a point? Just in case he has, he rushes forward:)

So, here is a list of all the townfolk who have been cruel to you or said cruel things or acted impolitely. Their names, their addresses, the degree of their offense. I arranged it in a few different ways, there's sort of youngest-to-oldest (that's this one), and then there is meanest-to-least-mean (that's this one), and then



1(E)/(S) (E) ENT EC 2.X EC Plat  
(S) ENT EC 2.X Stair Plat

2(S) (S) ~~, X EC Plat

I arranged it in order of the kinds of punishments I might suggest, and that list is structured in order of my favorite-to-least-favorite punishments.

*(A moment.)*

Would you like to hear some of my favorite punishments?

*(ELIZABETH is intrigued despite herself.)*

ELIZABETH. *(But this is a Yes.)* Can I stop you?

SCRATCH. *(Brightly.)* Okay! Great! Here we go! 1 S

Pox on the cow. 1 E 2 S

Pox on the hens.

Pox on the baby.

That's the pox section.

*(Pause.)*

Milkmaid is ornery.

Girlfriend is ornery.

Wife is ornery.

That's the Personal Relationship section.

*(Pause.)* 3 S

Ants.

Crickets.

Lice.

That's the insect section.

Are you still with me?

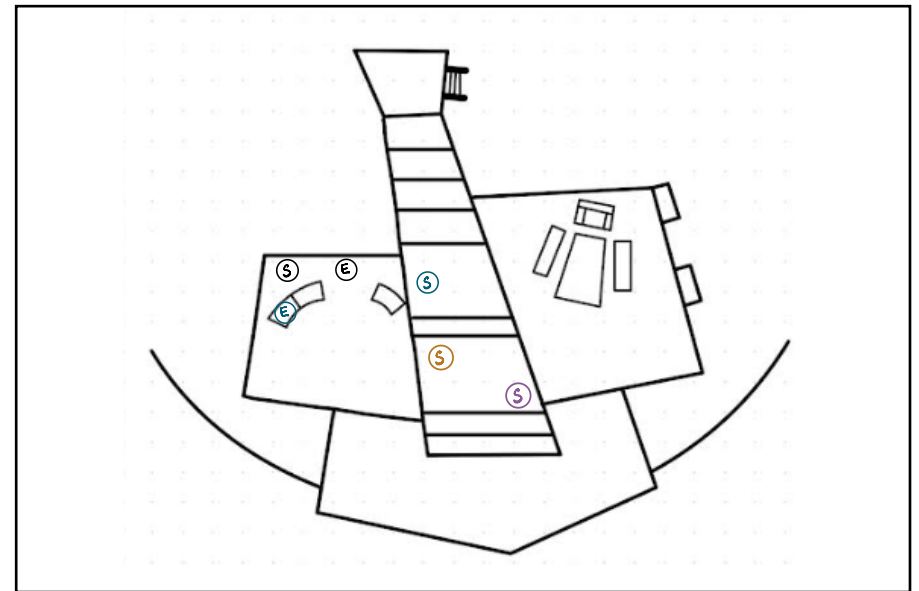
ELIZABETH. Those are all a bit...juvenile.

SCRATCH. I'm sorry?

ELIZABETH. You don't think?

A bit...under-effective.

SCRATCH. I assure you, they're *very* effective! Imagine: you sneeze and an ant falls out, the internal made external, a metaphor that / I particularly -



1 S S X CS

1 E E ↓ love seat

2 S S ↘ 2 steps

3 S S X DS stair Plat.

ELIZABETH. What about wholesale slaughter?

SCRATCH. Oh.

Well.

That's a thing that we - I mean, that's sort of an advanced offer.

But we *do* do that.

But it tends to be...advanced.

ELIZABETH. Advanced how?

Advanced like that's the deal you make with men?

*(An awkward moment - that is the deal he makes with men.)*

And women get crickets. Okay. 1(S)/(E)

SCRATCH. It sort of just works out like that.

*(Getting flustered, as she stares at him.)*

It's not - [about bias]  
 women have their own - [set of interests]  
 and *they* tend to be the ones who ask *me* [about insects]  
 so *I'm* not even  
 but  
 so  
 it just generally works out like that.  
 Unconsciously.

ELIZABETH. Well

maybe if you *consciously* offered women wholesale slaughter more often

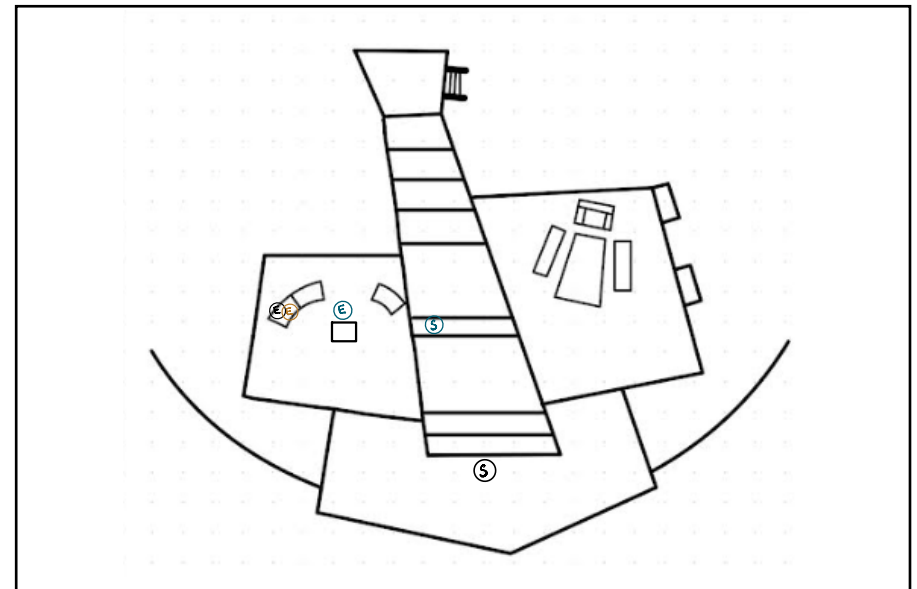
it would work out a different way. Generally.

SCRATCH. I guess maybe it might.

*(A beat. He is intrigued by her.)* 2(E)

*(She is intrigued by him and doesn't want to be.)*

ELIZABETH. Is that everything?



1(S)/(E) (S) ← og position

(E) X, ↓ her table

2(E) (E) ↓ og position



SCRATCH. Is that – what do you mean is that everything?

ELIZABETH. Well, are you done? With your pitch?

SCRATCH. Well I guess not, because you didn't like it.

ELIZABETH. I didn't say I didn't like it, I just said it was trivial and I asked about a less trivial version.

SCRATCH. Would you like to hear my less trivial version? 1 S

ELIZABETH. Would you like to deliver your less trivial version?

SCRATCH. I wouldn't mind the opportunity. 2 S

ELIZABETH. Okay, you're on. 1 E

*(Are they flirting? Both of them are enjoying the interaction and also wary of it. SCRATCH delivers his next pitch with the energy of flirtation.)*

SCRATCH. Okay.

Okay. 3 S

Okay: picture this. A sea of blood. A tsunami rises up. It too, is made of blood. The tsunami of blood crashes down on your village. Those who have scorned you? Taken your place in line at the well? Imagine their faces. Right before the blood wave devours them. They are crying out for help...and then they are gone. You were a victim. You were helpless in the face of their cruelty. Now...you are revenged.

*(A moment.)*

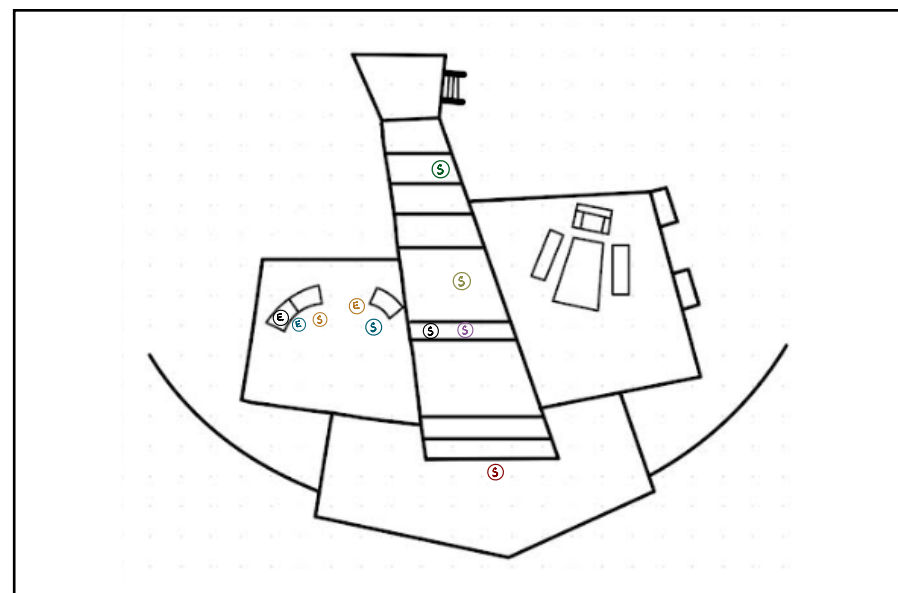
Yes No?

ELIZABETH. Hm. 6 S

SCRATCH. Visual. Poetic.

ELIZABETH. Pitch it to me the way you'd pitch it to a man.

SCRATCH. That was –



1 S S X DS of chair

2 S S X to E

1 E E ↑

3 S S X CS plat.

2 E E X SR of chair

4 S S X US plat

5 S S X DS plat

6 S S X CS plat.

ELIZABETH. "Visual poetic"? Nope.

You'd appeal to a different sense of self – wouldn't you? – than "visual poetic."

1 (E)

(*Seeing that she's scored a point.*) I'm standing here – I'm Sir Arthur. I run this town. I have the biggest balls you've ever seen. Pitch it to me now.

2 (E)

(*Game Time. SCRATCH gets a whole new kind of serious.*)

SCRATCH. Okay.

Sir Arthur. 1 (S)

It's nice to meet you. I've heard a lot about you.

ELIZABETH. (*"As Sir Arthur," but also, with steel.*) Get to the point.

SCRATCH. The point – Sir Arthur – is I have something that you've always wanted.

And that is: the power to destroy.

It's possible that you think of yourself as a man who builds.

But there is nothing so fully entwined with creation, than the act of destruction.

If I might reference some who have gone before you:

2 (S) Genghis Khan. A maker of culture, a destroyer of armies.

3 (S) Alexander the Great. A maker of nations, and a destroyer thereof.

4 (S) Odysseus. A maker of journeys, and of war.

You, Sir Arthur, were made for greater things than you have yet achieved.

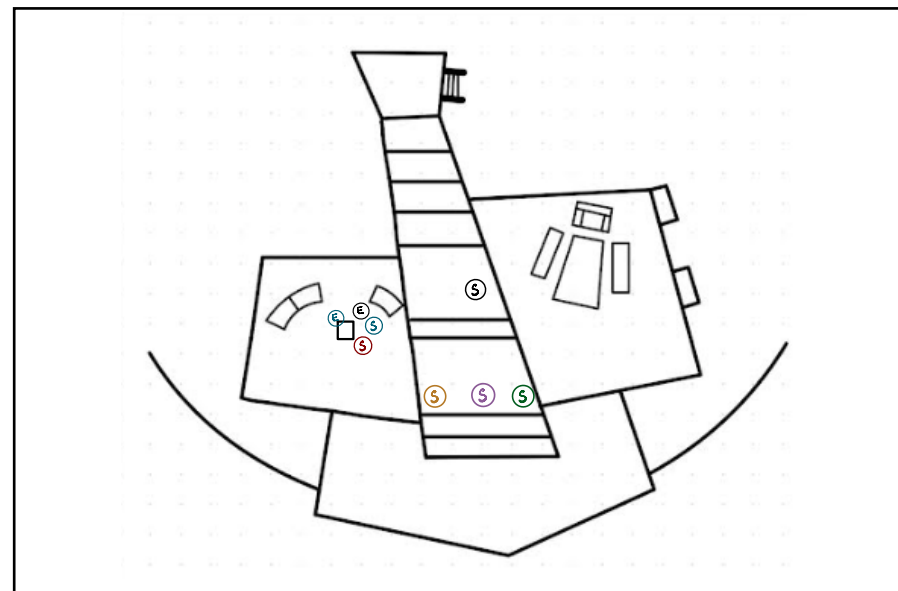
Man cannot be given greatness. He has it or he doesn't.

But he can be given power, with which to exercise his greatness. 5 (S)

And power, sir, is the thing that I bring to the table.

(*Pause.*)

Are you ready to say yes to history?



1 (E) (E) X to table

2 (E) (E) left foot on table

1 (S) (S) X to table

2 (S) (S) X CR Pbt

3 (S) (S) X CC Pbt

4 (S) (S) X CL Pbt

5 (S) (S) X DS of table, knees

*(A beat. This has gotten electric and charged.)*

*(Even though SCRATCH is giving his serious "man version" pitch.)*

*(It moves ELIZABETH in a fundamental way, to be addressed like this.)*

ELIZABETH. Yes, that is different.

SCRATCH. Forgive me.

Even the greatest salesman sometimes miscalculates his audience.

ELIZABETH. <sup>1 S</sup> Is that what happened, do you think? Did you "miscalculate" me?

*(Real sparks between them as:)*

SCRATCH. I think everybody miscalculates you.

And I think they do it all the time.

But I won't make that mistake again.

*(ELIZABETH feels seen. She has not felt like this at any point that she can remember, and it off-balances her a little.)*

ELIZABETH. Why me? <sup>1 E</sup>

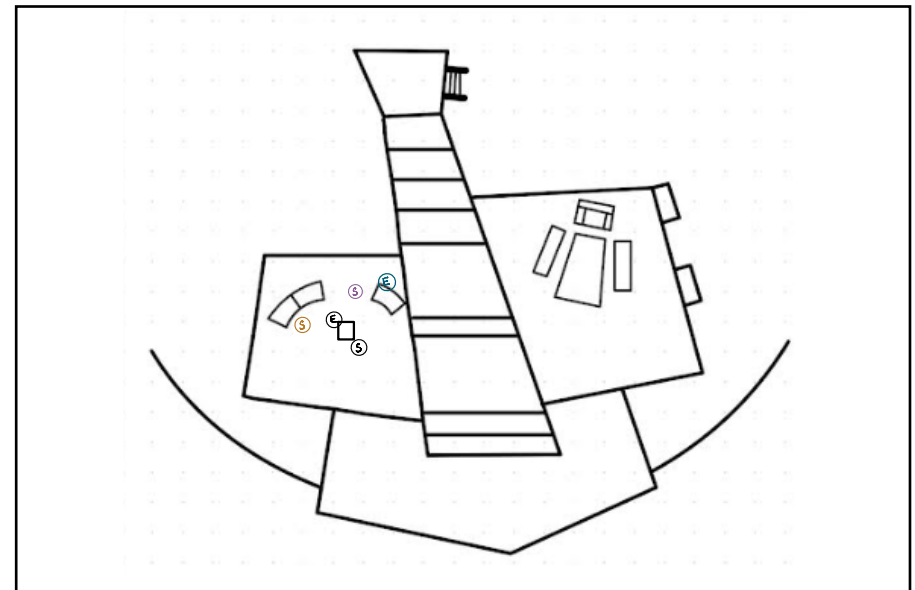
SCRATCH. You're the talk of the town. <sup>2 S</sup>

ELIZABETH. You're here because the villagers gossip about me?

SCRATCH. No, I'm here because they gossip about you, and under the gossip they fear you. <sup>3 S</sup>

ELIZABETH. I've never done anything to them. I barely do anything at all.

SCRATCH. You exist, and that's enough. And people like that – whose sheer existence speaks louder than anything they do or don't do – those people interest me. Broadly speaking.



<sup>1 S</sup> S ↑ by E

<sup>1 E</sup> E X behind her chair

<sup>2 S</sup> S X SL of loveseat

<sup>3 S</sup> S X SR of E's chair

(Pause, honest:)

SCRATCH. And then you said No.

ELIZABETH. Right.

SCRATCH. And I got even more interested.

(Beat.) 1 (E)

ELIZABETH. (A certain guarded honesty.) It's not that I don't want it. What you're selling.

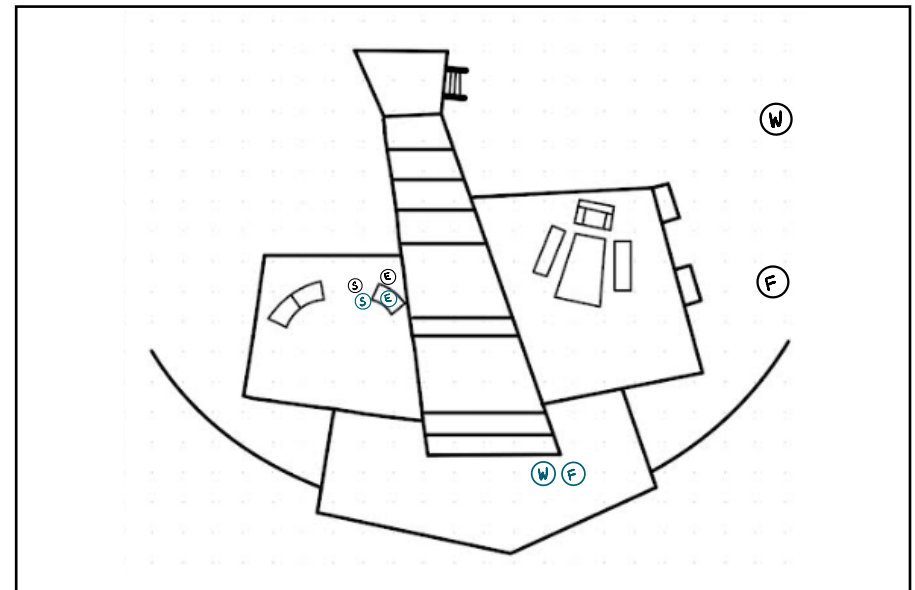
SCRATCH. Yes? 1 (S)

(A beat, in which ELIZABETH almost says any number of things. And then:)

ELIZABETH. I'll think about it.

1 (F)

1 (W)



1 (E) (E) ↓

1 (S) (S) X to (E)

1 (F) (F) ENT BP1

1 (W) (W) ENT BP3

**CUDDY.** *(Really asking.)* Why would I want to fight you?

**FRANK.** It might help.

**CUDDY.** How?

**FRANK.** I've found that generally  
violence  
helps.

**CUDDY.** Oh.

**FRANK.** Generally things start to feel better  
when it's simple and focused and  
sort of urgent  
but we don't have to.  
It's just if you want.

*(CUDDY knows this is the only thing FRANK  
can give him, and in that light:)*

**CUDDY.** OK. 1 ©

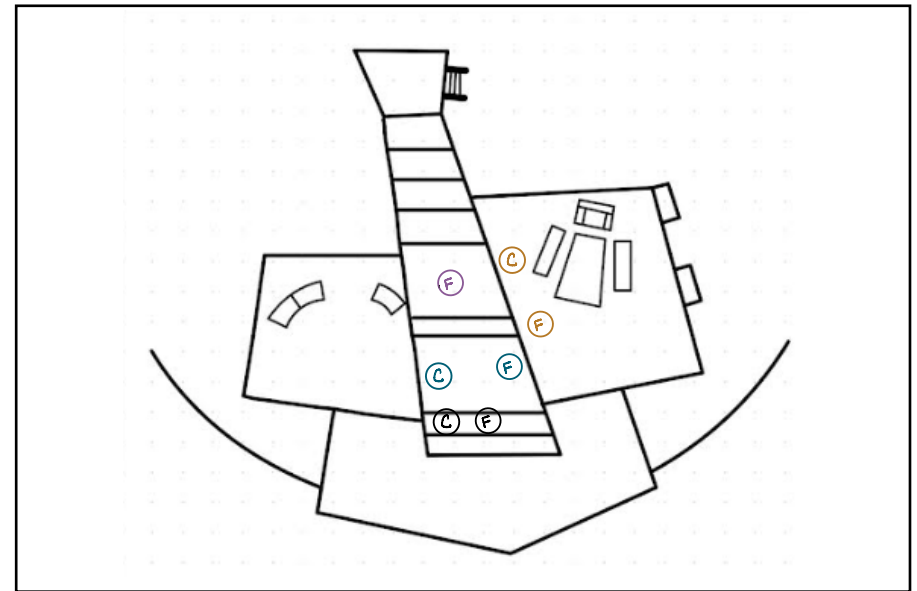
**FRANK.** OK?

**CUDDY.** I'll take it. 1 ②

*(They negotiate their way into this fight.)*

*(Maybe CUDDY sort of pushes FRANK and  
waits to see how that feels. Maybe FRANK  
encourages CUDDY to push him. It's a little bit  
like a dance at first, or like two kids playing.  
It's playful, curious, strange. New for them  
both.)*

*(It escalates. It becomes wild, reckless, savage,  
continuously inventive. Not slapstick, but  
with a sense of play that always tilts over the  
edge back into danger. Sometimes we aren't  
sure if we're witnessing destruction or a  
seduction. Strange things come to hand and  
are used as weapons, but we believe in the  
danger of these things.)*



1 © ② ↑, X DS stair plat.

1 ② ② ↑, X DS stair plat.

FIGHT: ② • ② light int. face each other 4 seconds

- ② lightly pushes ②

light int. {

- 2 ② ② steps back to Ban Plat, grabs napkin
- 3 ② ② lightly hits ② x2 w / napkin, X CS stair plat
- 2 © ② X Ban Plat. via CS stair plat, grabs napkin from ② on second hit



*(Then the real violence leaks in.)*

*(CUDDY and FRANK are increasingly frenzied. CUDDY taps into a violence inside himself that is a revelation, a tidal wave, that sweeps him off his feet. FRANK falters in the face of this onslaught. It wasn't what he was expecting.)*

*(And then...this happens quickly, so quickly, faster even than the speed of CUDDY's understanding:)*

*(CUDDY kills FRANK.)*

*(A moment. CUDDY realizes what he's done. He is transfixed. He's frozen. Disbelieving at first. This wasn't what he wanted. Was it?)*

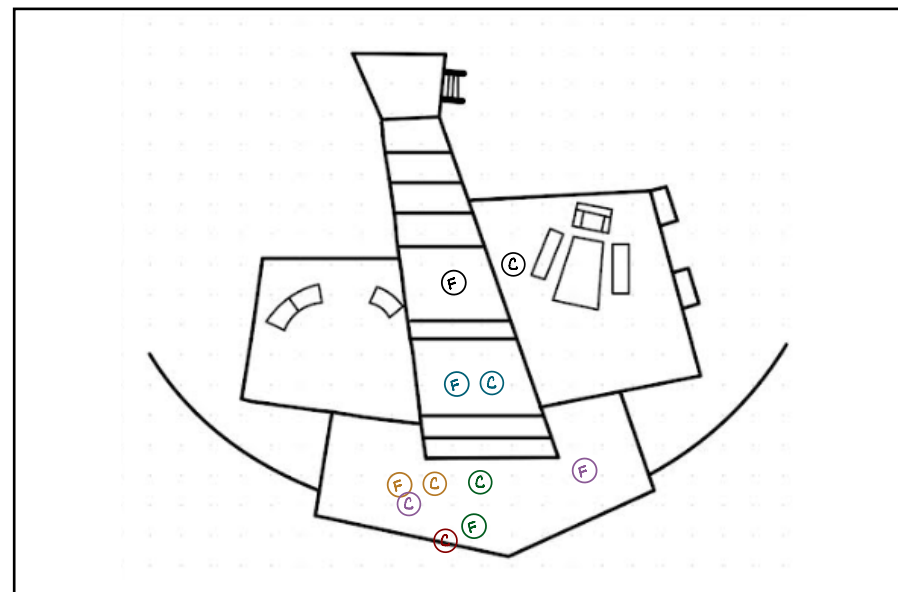
*(CUDDY kneels by FRANK's body.)*

*(He is numb. He realizes this is real. It is possible that he touches FRANK, that he scrubs blood off his hands. A simple, repetitive gesture of shock. Maybe the gesture takes over. CUDDY performs a Morris dance.)*

*(This is his aria. He does it just for himself, with no sense that there are any eyes on him. It is about anguish and desire and sorrow and loneliness that is constant and searing, and the sick feeling of victory when you've achieved a thing you wish you hadn't actually done, but you were capable of it nonetheless.)*

*(It is very strange and uncomfortable and oddly beautiful and sometimes funny and sad. It may not even be a "Morris" dance at all. But it should move us, even as we squirm a little.)*

medium  
intensity



1 (C/F) C hits F w napkin, both quickly to DS stair plat

2 (C/F) C hits F w napkin, both quickly to lower plat

F grabs C wrist - 1 sec hold, pulls C closer - 1 sec hold

3 (C) F pulls C into light choke hold - 3 sec hold

C slow deflate into F, grabs hair - 5 second long

3 (F) C pulls F hair, F stumbles DSL

4 (C) F holds out napkin, C tries to grab x2

4 (F) + 5 (C) on second grab, F grabs C waist and tackles - C head DS

F straddle C, grapple + hold C down - 6 seconds, C taps out

F ↑, throws napkin on C, pulls C up



(CUDDY finishes. He stands very still, his chest heaving, out of breath, transported, close to tears.)

1 (C/F) (C) X SR of stairs  
(F) X SL of stairs } face each other 4 seconds

(C) throws napkin to (F) (lets it drop), (F) throws on Ban Plat.

2 (C/F) Both look at Ban Plat, both run up to table

(F) grabs platter, swings at (C), (C) ducks + grabs diff

(C) hits (F) in head/shoulder w/ platter, (F) falls on stool

3 (C/F) (C) X (F), grabs (F) shirt (back), pulls up, turns (F) around

— extreme eye contact + minimal space between — 3 secs.

(F) slam (C) head on table, (C) facing US → (F) backhands (C)

4 (F) (C) twist down facing DS, (F) X throne, ↓ legs on table — 10 seconds

4 (C) (C) ↑, push (F) feet off table, punch (F) in face, push (F) off throne

5 (C/F) (F) land on back on CS stair plat, (C) grabs (F) legs

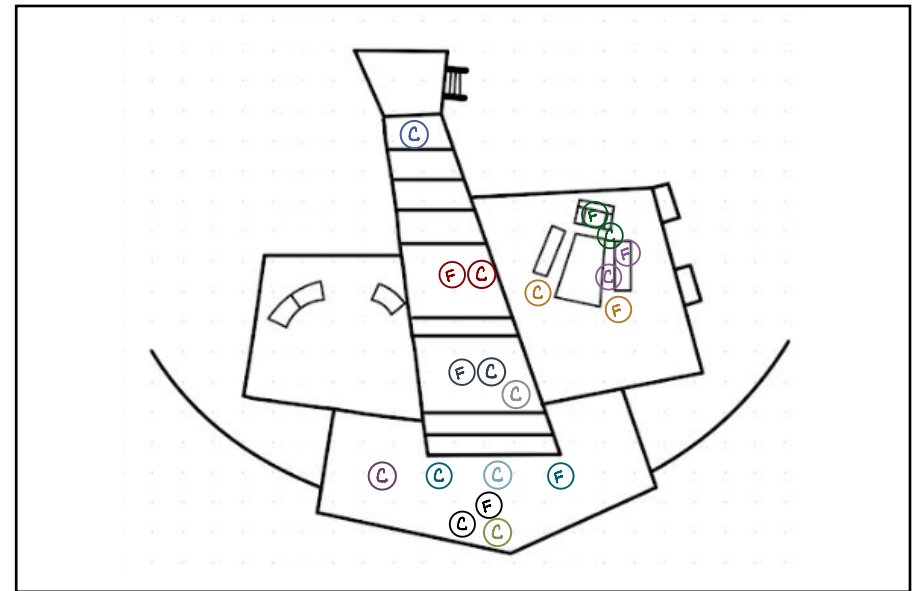
(C) straddles (standing) (F), pulls (F) up by shirt, punch (F) in face

(C) stumbles US of (F), (F) rolls US onto hands-knees, (C) kicks (F) in stomach

6 (C/F) (F) rolls ↘, (C) ↘, (C) straddles (F), holds down 3 seconds

(F) "spits" on (C), (C) punches (F) face x3 quickly, (C) ↑, turns US

(F) grabs (C) leg, (C) "stamps" (US) (F) head, (F) goes limp



7 (C) (C) X DSC

8 (C) (C) X DSR

9 (C) (C) ↗

10 (C) (C) ↘ DS stair plat

11 (C) (C) ↘ DS plat

BLACKOUT (F) EXT EC2

(C) EXT BP2

→ High Intensity, extremely quick