

# December Duet

Written by Nick Macintosh-Smith and John Hood.  
From an original idea by John Hood.

## 1. EXT. DRIVEWAY. DEEP, DARK, SEDUCTIVE NIGHT.

Black wrought iron gates swing open; we barely catch the lyrical sign slanted across the baroque gates which reads "Darkville". Past the gates we see a gothic house with a peaked terrace and a makeshift observatory. Somehow throughout the ages it has managed to preserve an air of opulent mystery. Like an abandoned ball room, filled with the sweet aroma of decadent memories. Sparsely decorated. Yet the lucid midnight light, which seemed to caress its featureless facade, added form and texture.

As we close in on the house it transforms into a modern building containing components of the old. Some tiles have slipped from the roof and the children, that had played in its abandoned grounds, have thrown stones through some of the windows. One light shines out through the latticed attic window, and a silhouetted figure stands looking out at us. Throughout our journey, the silhouette speaks:

### THE NARRATOR

Far from passion, pain and guilt  
In caverns far from inn or church  
Their kind in coldness ever dwell.  
With folded wings they take the hanged man's perch  
Dead men's spirits in the air  
Blind to the fate that nature gave  
We envy their winged escape  
Yet share their destined grave.  
So high yet seeing naught but dark  
Our souls with burdens great  
Leathered limbs caress the sky  
Gods blinded by the weight  
The wheel turns, the spirit memories remain,  
A never changing face,  
More sooted than the world below  
Too numb to change their place

INT. LEWIS' HOUSE.

Ambient, ominous.

A close up of Michael Jackson's "Dangerous" 'pop-up' album cover on a desk in LEWIS' room. We pull to covers of Vogue, Detour, Homme and modelling photos splayed out. The top photo is of ELEANOR / CLAIRE

CLAIRE is looking at the paintings but with disinterest. She appears to have no appreciation of art and would rather not be there. She is wearing a baggy jumper and jeans in contrast to LEWIS' suit. She seems nervous and jumpy and avoids direct eye contact with Lewis.

**LEWIS**

How's your new therapist?

Claire doesn't answer.

**LEWIS**

Your work has improved.  
You should be proud of your art.

**CLAIRE** (Expectantly.)

Why did you ask me to come here?

Clearly she is not the same person she used to be.

Lewis, seated, is looking through photos of various actresses and models. He smugly pushes them away. His back remains turned away from her.

**CLAIRE**

What did you want to show me?

LEWIS finally turns to face her, and, as in doing so, gets up. Finally revealed in immaculate pose. He fastidiously straightens his jacket.

**LEWIS**

Maybe you should go! (quiet - she doesn't really hear)  
I'm not feeling right.

**CLAIRE**

No. I'm here... Show me...

CUT TO a close up of a picture of a beautiful woman, in portrait. The image is a stylised, black and white reproduction. Lewis strokes the photo and approaches Claire. She nervously backs away, uncomfortable at his closeness. Lewis reaches up to touch Claire's hair. She flinches away. The picture is of ELEANOR. However CLAIRE doesn't recognise herself.

**CLAIRE**

Who is she?

**LEWIS**

She was... the true artist?

**CLAIRE**

What went wrong?

LEWIS' eyes are vulnerable. He turns away from her and looks, longingly into a mirror.

**LEWIS**

Everything...

3. EXT. ALLEYWAY. NIGHT. The air is heavy with the sounds of nocturnal whispers and the hum of the city. (The scene is sepia toned, disjointed and nightmarish)

Littered with black sacks and filth, the alley leads to a dead end. ELEANOR, LEWIS' wife, is smartly dressed. A modern material girl. She is being attacked by a man cloaked in darkness. Although she is in great danger, she is using a firm tone of voice and clearly knows her attacker.

**ELEANOR**

Whatever you think I've done, you're wrong!  
I haven't done anything...

**FIGURE** ( His voice an ill-tempered hiss)  
You lied to me again.

**ELEANOR**

I had to!!!

The Figure raises a hand to strike Eleanor

**FIGURE**

Why don't you... (desperate)  
Love me... Eleanor?

**ELEANOR**

I do... (tenderly) I do...

The figure reaches for a knife at his belt. There is a confusing flurry of movement, in which a second man bursts out of the mist, knocking the FIGURE to one side. The second man, revealed to be LEWIS, is violently slashed across the face by the FIGURE. LEWIS pushes the FIGURE to the ground and helps ELEANOR to her feet. The FIGURE lies face down in a puddle of rapidly spreading blood. (At this point the sepia tone takes on a reddish tone)

4. INT. LEWIS' HOUSE.

FADE TO a picture of ELEANOR, fluttering in slow-motion to the floor. LEWIS slumps down onto the chair; weary. We see his scarred face for the first time in its full light. (As if its always been there, but the audience wasn't looking for it).

**LEWIS** (Distantly)

She was never the same again...  
She moved away...

**CLAIRE** (Inquisitively)

Do you miss her?

**LEWIS** (his voice resonates with regret)

Every day.

He looks at her. She is noticeably uncomfortable under his gaze.

**CLAIRE**

You said you had something to show me?  
You said it would mean something too me?

**LEWIS**

Not here! Not yet...

**LEWIS (V/O) / SEGUE TO SCENE 5**

Do you trust me Claire?

5. INT. ART ROOM. DAYLIGHT floods through the windows.

Five or six people are working on various artistic endeavours. CLAIRE and LEWIS are amongst the group. Claire is fastidiously cutting out images of models and herself. She is deeply involved in the work. As she cuts we see the faint trace of her slit wrist.

**LEWIS**

You've really come a long way... You have real talent...

Claire seems slightly awkward / embarrassed.

**CLAIRE**

They're just sketches. I'm no artist...

**LEWIS**

I disagree. It's been good therapy...

She manages a faint smile.

**CLAIRE**

Thank you...

Lewis picks up one of the uncut photos. It is of Claire / Eleanor in a modelling pose.

**LEWIS (enthusiastically)**

You do remember.

Claire looks at him in bewilderment - unsure of what he's talking about. Her memory is hazy, hidden, vague. She changes the conversation. And directs her attention to the art work. A close up of her eyes.

The image segues back to LEWIS' house. Claire is still looking at Lewis' art. She is looking at a painting of a beautiful male model.

**CLAIRE**

Some of these are beautiful.

**LEWIS**

They're all beautiful. But all wrong.

Claire surprised and suspicious. Nervously twitching her arms.

**CLAIRE**

What do you mean?

LEWIS is obviously agitated and impatient at CLAIRES apparent inability to see his point. He gestures towards another painting - a close up portrait of a man.

**LEWIS**

Look at that one.  
Look at the purity.

CLAIRE is looking at LEWIS' scar.

**CLAIRE**

It doesn't matter.

**LEWIS**

You know it does. I thought you understood.  
You used to understand.

**CLAIRE**

No one is ever that beautiful.

**LEWIS (heartfelt)**

You were!

He grabs her and holds her face in his hands.

**LEWIS**

Look I can't lie to you. I never could...

He wipes away the badly applied make-up covering CLAIRES tear drop tattoo.

**LEWIS (V/O) SEGUE TO SCENE 7**

You do remember...

7. EXT. ALLEYWAY. NIGHT. Nocturnal.

As before, we move rapidly down the alleyway through swirling mist towards the dead end. There the threatening FIGURE looms over ELEANOR. The scene is different this time, showing the reality of LEWIS' attack.

**ELEANOR**

Whatever you think I've done, you're wrong.  
I haven't done anything.

**LEWIS**

You lied to me again.

**ELEANOR (Screaming)**

I had to. Lewis please...

**LEWIS**

Why don't you love me Eleanor?

**ELEANOR (Sobbing)**

I do. I do.

At the open end of the alley, a PASSER-BY hears ELEANOR. He moves cautiously towards the source of the cries. The FIGURE reaches for the knife in his belt.

The PASSER-BY notices the knife.

**PASSER-BY**

Hey!

The FIGURE turns, and we see that it is LEWIS. ELEANOR claws at his face, ripping the flesh off his cheek. The PASSER-BY knocks him down.

8. INT. LEWIS' HOUSE.

With Lewis shouting after her, Claire/Eleanor is running out of the room and down a stairwell to the exit. She is clearly upset by the past she has remembered.

**LEWIS**

His voice becoming more fragile and desperate.

Eleanor, come back to me. I need you.

9. EXT. STREET. NIGHT

Lewis chases Eleanor along a dark lit street. He looks pathetic, not threatening.

C.U of Lewis' face watching Claire disappear into the distance.

10. EXT. AIRPORT. Sometime later, months, years? CLAIRE is there dressed differently. A mixture of the old and new. Clearly she has progressed past her therapy but the old ELEANOR has not returned.

Cut to an aircraft screaming overhead. Eleanor walks in long shot towards a runway. We see Lewis approaching.

**LEWIS**  
Eleanor!

CLAIRE stops, turning angrily.

**LEWIS**  
I'm sorry Ellie.

Thrusting Lewis backwards.

**CLAIRE**  
Keep away from me!

On unsure footing, Lewis stumbles. A wedding ring falls from his hand. An aircraft is preparing to land on a runway.

**LEWIS**  
I need you... I can't live without you again.  
You don't have to do anything you don't want to do.

LEWIS places the ring on CLAIRE'S finger.

**LEWIS**  
This is what I had to show you.  
Remember our vows?

**CLAIRE**  
I do remember...  
And now I'm trying to forget...

The 'plane has dropped its undercarriage. After a moment's hesitation, Eleanor

moves closer to Lewis. She brushes her fingers softly against his scarred cheek, her ring glinting in the scarlet airfield lights. In long shot we see her walking away.

The end.

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