

How to Live Forever Sample

[Post-CMU Production Draft]

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Summary

Once upon a time, three witches tell us a story. Or is it a prophecy? In it, Anne, a 1590s midwife, summons a pre-historical Priestess in a quest for power, history, and truth. There's talk of witchcraft in her town and she wants to be prepared to protect herself, and her apprentice, Bridget, who's like a daughter. But her spell has unintended consequences: it opens a connection across time and space with a modern actress/wellness guru named Gwyneth, who is on the same quest, struggling to answer the questions of her daughter, Apple.

Anne and Gwyneth

Gwyneth is hugely pregnant, surrounded by linen. Dressed all in white. She paces. She breathes.

The light is soft. Gentle music plays.

Gwyneth grits her teeth. She dabs her forehead with a cloth. Sweat. Dab. Gwyneth closes her eyes and tries to meditate.

Anne arrives.

ANNE

You're doing well.

GWYNETH

Of course I am.

ANNE

Of course.

GWYNETH

I'm prepared for this.

ANNE

I don't doubt it.

Gwyneth looks up.

GWYNETH

...You're not my Doula!

ANNE

I'm here to help you bring her into the world.

GWYNETH

Her?

ANNE

Your daughter.

GWYNETH

I don't know the sex.

ANNE

You do.

GWYNETH
I specifically didn't want to know so I don't.

ANNE
But you do.

GWYNETH
No.

ANNE
Not a girl?

GWYNETH
I just don't know.

ANNE
So maybe a girl.

A very tense pause.
Anne smiles.

GWYNETH
Why are you smiling.

ANNE
The birth of a daughter is a happy thing.

GWYNETH
I don't. know. The sex.

ANNE
She'll tell you what she is soon enough.

Gwyneth grits her teeth against a contraction. Deep breath through the nose. It passes.

ANNE
You can scream if you want.
Don't have to hold tight like that on my account.

GWYNETH
I'm very calm actually very relaxed.

ANNE
You seem very relaxed

GWYNETH

I'm imagining I'm a relaxed person so that's what I am.

ANNE

...You're imagining you're a different person than yourself?

GWYNETH

I'm a person who acts like someone else.

That's what I know how to do and I'm very good at it.

ANNE

...So you're *not*—

GWYNETH

I am! Calm!

ANNE

Oh?

My mistake.

GWYNETH

Why are you here?

Anne dabs Gwyneth's forehead with a cool damp cloth. Gwyneth closes her eyes.

ANNE

I heard you calling and I came.

GWYNETH

I didn't call you. I don't call people.

ANNE

Calm yourself.

GWYNETH

I'm doing my breathing. I'm in control of my body and life. I'm the goddess of the universe that is me.

ANNE

I don't know many women who can say that.

GWYNETH

Well I can.

Anne raises her eyebrows.

ANNE

A goddess would be free to scream. If there was pain. If she wanted to scream.

GWYNETH

I'm a goddess.

ANNE

Then scream.

GWYNETH

No.

ANNE

Scream if you want.

GWYNETH

I don't want to scream.

Anne shrugs.

ANNE

Oh! I see that now.

My mistake.

Gwyneth grits against a contraction. Anne rubs her back.

ANNE

I'm here to help.

Deep breath through the nose.

GWYNETH

I didn't ask for your help.

ANNE

Still I'm here.

GWYNETH

You're not helping.

Anne rubs Gwyneth's back.

Her touch is soothing.

*Gwyneth leans into it.
The pain passes.
Gwyneth relaxes slightly.
Anne dabs Gwyneth's forehead.
Maybe Anne lights some incense and waves it gently around the room.*

ANNE
What's her name? Your daughter?

Long. Irritated. Pause.

GWYNETH
...Apple.

ANNE
...Unusual.

GWYNETH
My children will be unique.

ANNE
They will be yours.

GWYNETH
It's going to set a trend.

ANNE
They will be constellations.

GWYNETH
I don't want them to be restricted by gender.

ANNE
They will be blades of grass.

GWYNETH
...It's gender-neutral.

ANNE
It's...?

GWYNETH
Special

ANNE

All children are special.

GWYNETH

It's good for a boy or a girl.

ANNE (*tasting it in her mouth*)

Apple...

GWYNETH

What's the problem.

ANNE

She will bear fruit.

She will be sweet but also bitter, sharp but also soft.

GWYNETH

...yes.

ANNE

Yes.

Pause.

ANNE

A good name.

GWYNETH

...thank you.

Anne nods.

Gwyneth nods.

Gwyneth almost screams from a sudden, painful contraction.

She bites her lip. She groans.

Anne watches her intently.

ANNE

You can scream. Go on. Scream.

GWYNETH

No.

ANNE

It's filling you up, it's bursting your lungs.

GWYNETH
I'm FINE!

ANNE
Of course you are.

GWYNETH
I don't need to scream. I'm in control I don't need to scream!

ANNE
I can see that.

GWYNETH
I DON'T! I DON'T NEED TO SCREAM.

ANNE
Tell me. Tell me.

GWYNETH
I DON'T NEED TO SCREAM I'M IN CONTROL OF MY BODY I DON'T NEED TO SCREAM.

ANNE
That's it girlie, let it out.

GWYNETH
I AM HEALTHY I AM PURE I AM A GODDESS I AM A GLOWING BEACON OF LIGHT I
CONTAIN THE UNIVERSE I AM A GARDEN AND GARDENS ARE PEACEFUL I DON'T
FUCKING NEED TO SCREAM.

*Gwyneth screams.
Inside Gwyneth's scream is the sound of music, of women singing, chanting, and Anne
listens for it so hard, but she still doesn't hear what she wants to hear. She sighs. Back
to Gwyneth.*

There is blood on the floor.

*Gwyneth crouches, clutching her abdomen.
Anne goes to her, wraps her arms around her.
Anne dabs Gwyneth's brow and guides her gently to the floor.
She smiles.*

ANNE
That's it, sweet.
Now, push.

*Gwyneth pushes.
She screams.
Anne smiles.*

ANNE
You've got it now, love.
You've got it now.

*Gwyneth births an apple.
Anne takes it reverently in her hands.
She hands the apple to Gwyneth.
Gwyneth looks at it like it is the sweetest, most perfect thing she has ever seen.
Gwyneth takes a bite.*

Complete script available by request.