

# **How to Live Forever**

## **[Sample]**

By Brandy N. Carie

*HOW TO LIVE FOREVER* was developed with the support of SPACE on Ryder Farm.  
*Act I* received an educational workshop production at Carnegie Mellon University.

Draft 6  
11.21.20  
27155 Silver Oak Lane  
Santa Clarita, CA 91387  
612-618-3060  
[brandyncarie@gmail.com](mailto:brandyncarie@gmail.com)  
brandyncarie.com

## **Synopsis**

Once upon a time, there were 3 women and their daughters: an all-powerful Priestess and her acolyte Cassandra; 1590s midwife, Anne, and her protégé Bridget; and Gwyneth, a modern actress/wellness guru, and her daughter Apple.

Anne seeks magic but only finds Gwyneth, who does not seem to be a powerful witch. She is plagued by the Priestess, who hints at power but is limited by space-time and maternal distractions. After assisting Bridget with an abortion Anne is tried for witchcraft. She begs Gwyneth to perform the trial, and Gwyneth is disappointed to find her greatest strength so weak: she can tell a story but she can't change the end. Anne uses her only spell to save Bridget by transporting her to the future...where she meets Apple, and finds the future isn't so different from the past.

HOW TO LIVE FOREVER is a story of mothers and daughters; it's a reimagined mythos of womanhood; it's a dream for the future and a eulogy for a lost history. It's a spell.

## **Characters**

### **The Mothers**

ANNE – F – Any Race. Older. 1590-ish "Scotland." A healer; some think her a Witch.

GWYNETH – F – White. Younger. Now-ish LA. Performs serenity. Trolls call her a witch.

*Also plays MARY SHELLEY, SAMANTHA, BISHOP, and REBOOT MARY WOLL.*

PRIESTESS – F – Any Race. Ageless, timeless. The most powerful person in the world.

### **The Daughters**

BRIDGET – F – Any Race. Young but not at heart. Anne's protégé, beloved. Angry.

APPLE – F – Any Race. Young in every sense. Gwyneth's child. Searching but for what?

CASSANDRA – F – Any Race. Young but remembers everything. Priestess's successor.

### **The Witches**

WITCH 1 – F – plays herself, Mary Woll, Actress Playing Mary Woll, Kelly, Padma

WITCH 2 – F – plays herself, Director, Male Director, Sibyll, Anchor, Guard

WITCH 3 – F – plays herself, Third Assistant Director, Moustache, Reboot Mary Shelley

*There can be any number of additional witches who take part in spells. The doubled Witch roles can also be redistributed among the Mothers and Daughters so only 6 actors are required (but more Witches = more fun, so...)*

## **On Time and Space**

This play takes place in present day LA (ish) and 1590s Scotland (ish) and a magical realm outside time and space where Witches meet to tell tales and do spells. This realm is also the theatre. The similarities between these places outweigh the differences.

Time flows differently for different people. A month for Anne is 25 years for Gwyneth, which is a few days to the Priestess. The characters speak the same language;

sometimes they see each others' worlds and sometimes they meet in a middle place.

Transitions should be as seamless as tilting your head to look at the same picture from a different angle.

The rules change in Act 2.

**Act I, Scene 5.**

*Anne in the woods. Dark, fire. Tonight, not so cold.*

ANNE

It might be I'm much closer to an addled old fool than I'd care to admit.  
But tonight a breeze blew through my window and I thought I heard you call.

*Anne looks around. Is anyone listening?  
...Maybe tonight they are.*

ANNE

I heard a tale in my crib that there were once true witches who could taste the soul of the earth, pull power into their hands, send that power into the bodies of the ill and make them well again.

She told me they could stop the wars of the rich! They could transform fear into trust, anger into thanks, hate into love. Just: *(she snaps)*.

I never met a witch like that so maybe my mother was lying.

Or maybe they're all dead, and she's the closest to a history book a woman ever had. I'd like to find out.

*She reaches up under her skirts and extracts it, covered in menstrual blood.  
She flicks the blood into the fire and it flares, magically.*

ANNE

I'm willing to make a deal, if you'll come.  
I'm calling you.

*She begins to move—a dance or a contortion. She's making this up as she goes along.*

ANNE

I'm calling *you!* ANSWER ME

*I summon you:* You harlots, You whores

You she-devils, you mothers, you monsters and succubi, you witches who came before, whose knowledge was destroyed, who sacrificed your bodies and minds for tomorrow, for your daughters, for me! Come!

*Anne is possessed, bewitched, consumed, the dance is wild.  
In the shadows, Priestess appears, watching Anne. She waits.*

ANNE

I summon the power of a history, a legacy; Enchantresses of the time before now and the time that is coming, whose power will be beyond my imagining, who will remember, who have worked and will again work magics big and small, to light the path, to push me forward, to make me whole, to guide me home!

*Anne falls to the ground, exhausted.*

*In another time, a time like now, the light rises on Gwyneth, sitting in a cushy armchair in a TV talk show interview.*

*Gwyneth does not see Anne. Anne gasps! And cranes to get a closer look.*

*The Priestess backs away into the shadows and disappears.*

*Kelly, a rubbery neon TV talk show host, is here, too!*

KELLY

Gwyneth! Gwyneth, it's so incredible to have you on our show today!

GWYNETH *(gracious! A star!)*

Thank you, it's wonderful to be here.

KELLY

You just look so young!

GWYNETH

Thank you.

KELLY

Your skin, it's like an elastic band! You have a glow.

GWYNETH

I drink a lot of water.

KELLY

But that's not what we're here to talk about today, is it?

*Gwyneth just smiles.*

GWYNETH

...Well, /no.

KELLY

No! Not at all! We're here because you have a little newsletter.

GWYNETH

Well it's gotten quite /big lately.

KELLY

Big, it's a big newsletter.

*Gwyneth smiles.*

KELLY

You're proposing all kinds of natural remedies, all kinds of alternatives to modern medicine, all kinds of skin products, right? Tell us about that?

GWYNETH

Well, I've always wanted to make something of my own. Do more than just acting. And recently /I realized how little I know...

KELLY

vaginal steam, coffee enema, Jade egg, vampire repellent, /mineral sunscreen—

GWYNETH

*Psychic* vampire—it's a metaphor—

KELLY

Charcoal, detox, reishi powder, pine pollen, raw milk/ organic moisturizer—

GWYNETH

These things make me feel—

KELLY

Did you know you're the most hated woman in the world?

GWYNETH

...I did read that.

KELLY

But you're also People's most beautiful.

GWYNETH

Isn't that the same thing?

KELLY

Your life is so beautiful it makes me want to cry.

GWYNETH

The brand is aspirational.

KELLY

We're all hoping something really bad happens to you.

GWYNETH

It's been lovely chatting with you!

KELLY

Lovely!

*Canned applause. The bright studio lights go down.  
Gwyneth puts her head between her knees and breathes deeply.  
Anne approaches.*

ANNE

Hello!

GWYNETH

Ah!

*Anne gives Gwyneth a quizzical look.*

GWYNETH

Are you with the studio? I thought that was the last segment.

ANNE

I am not familiar with the remedies you offer, but I am prepared to learn.  
Did you create them yourself?

*Gwyneth turns on the charm.*

GWYNETH

I'm not a healer, I'm a curator. Everything I learn, I share with you.  
It's all in the newsletter!

*Pause.*

ANNE

You're different than I...

GWYNETH

I'm just a woman

*ANNE (Realizing something. Deeply disappointed)*

Oh. You are.

*Anne looks around. Is there a powerful witch hiding in a corner?*

GWYNETH  
Have we met before?

ANNE  
I don't...  
Maybe so.

GWYNETH  
Was it in El Salvador?

ANNE  
Your baby's going to be fine.

GWYNETH  
Excuse me?

*Gwyneth darts glances around the studio.*

GWYNETH  
I don't have a baby.

ANNE  
Well not yet

*Gwyneth leaps up.*

GWYNETH  
That's not public. It's mine. And no one else's.

ANNE  
...I can understand that.

*Gwyneth looks at Anne and knows that Anne knows things.*

GWYNETH  
How can you tell in your body if the baby is healthy? If it will be strong?

ANNE  
...I've witnessed many a birth with my eyes and hands, but the only thing my body knows is...loss.

GWYNETH  
Who have you lost?

ANNE

Oh, lots of babies.

My mother. My grandmother. Her mother, and hers. And back, and back...

GWYNETH

...I've lost them, too. But sometimes—

ANNE (*hopeful*)

You hear them!

GWYNETH

...no. Ultimately, no.

ANNE

You're not what I expected at all.

GWYNETH (*irritated*)

There are other women. The essential oil people, some sex cult Priestess with a pentagram carved into her forehead. Why aren't you talking to them? I'm sure they'd be happy to see you.

ANNE

I think you must've called me. Right when I was trying—

GWYNETH

No.

ANNE

I think that you did.

GWYNETH

I don't call people. People call me.  
You must have called me.

ANNE

No...You're not who I was trying to call.

GWYNETH

Maybe I have what you need.

ANNE

*WHAT* do you have?

GWYNETH

I know everybody and everybody knows me. Or wishes they did.  
I have the best Masseuse, the best acupuncturist, the best herbal teas, the best organic  
alfalfa, the best farmers market, the best—

ANNE

But can you see the future? Can you change the past?

GWYNETH

No. Obviously.

ANNE

What about the other way around?

GWYNETH

I don't know.

ANNE (*Skeptical*)

And when *you* are in need? Who do you call?

GWYNETH

I call myself.

ANNE

When your baby comes, will you call me?

GWYNETH (*stiff*)

I have a doula.

*Anne nods. She begins to exit.*

GWYNETH

Wait!

*Anne looks back.*

GWYNETH

You know things. I can tell you know things.

ANNE

I know some things.

GWYNETH

Then tell me! Tell me something true.

ANNE  
What truth?

GWYNETH  
How to be powerful.

ANNE  
I don't know that.

GWYNETH  
How to look at my body and see every woman that ever was.

ANNE (*sadly*)  
...I only see myself.

GWYNETH  
Then what good are you?

ANNE  
I ask myself the same thing all the time.

*Gwyneth leaves. Anne sighs and leaves, too.*

**Scene 6.**

*Cassandra grinds herbs with a mortar and pestle. It is a long ago time. Greek-ish.  
The Priestess enters. She looks inside the mortar. Cassandra looks at her expectantly.*

PRIESTESS  
Not yet.

CASSANDRA  
But I've been grinding forever.

PRIESTESS (*smiles*)  
Not forever, Cassandra.

CASSANDRA  
Hmph.

PRIESTESS  
Has no one come today?

CASSANDRA  
I guess everybody is well today.

PRIESTESS  
Well and happy.

CASSANDRA  
No one is ever happy.  
They always ask you for things they don't need.

PRIESTESS  
Soon they'll ask you.

CASSANDRA  
Suppose I say "no"?

PRIESTESS  
And why would you do that?

CASSANDRA  
Because they don't need it!

PRIESTESS  
Who are we to say what they need?

CASSANDRA  
Because I have better things to do with my time, then!

PRIESTESS  
Are we not here to serve them?

CASSANDRA  
You're the most powerful person in the world!  
You heal the sick, you see the future, you calm storms and bring rain and protect us all  
from beasts and plague and men!  
But they come here asking you to make them a love spell or take away their boils.  
Shouldn't *they* serve *you*?

PRIESTESS  
Is that what you want this world to be?  
One where everyone but us is afraid?

CASSANDRA  
...Wouldn't that be a change.

PRIESTESS

Are *you* afraid, daughter?

CASSANDRA

There are things to be afraid of.

PRIESTESS

Tell me.

CASSANDRA

...I had a dream. Or – a vision.

*The Priestess smiles. This is good!*

PRIESTESS

What did you see?

CASSANDRA

There was a man in long robes. He had a book.

He pointed his finger at me: I was surrounded with fire.

I fell back and back into a dark hole, and when I looked up you were looking down at me, but you were so far away.

I called you name and you didn't hear. You couldn't see me in the dark.

I just...kept falling.

*Cassandra looks at Priestess.*

CASSANDRA

What does it mean?

PRIESTESS

Give me your hand.

*Priestess studies Cassandra's palm for a long time. What she sees troubles her.*

PRIESTESS

Your dream was true. But it does not belong to you.

...This is your gift: You will see everyone's truth but your own.

CASSANDRA

Everyone's...?

PRIESTESS

It is a heavy burden, my daughter. But one I believe you can bear with honor.

CASSANDRA  
I hoped it was only a nightmare.

*Priestess shakes her shoulders a little, cheery.*

PRIESTESS  
Tonight we celebrate!  
Your gift has manifested itself, and it is *strong*. One day you will be a powerful leader.

CASSANDRA  
I don't feel powerful.

*Priestess kisses Cassandra on the forehead and stands.*

PRIESTESS  
Give it time, my love.  
Master your abilities! Tomorrow.  
Tonight: wine!

CASSANDRA  
Well when you put it that way.

*Cassandra begins to stand, grinning.*

PRIESTESS  
Ah—I said tonight!  
Right now:  
*(She peeks at the mortar again.)*  
That's not ready.

CASSANDRA  
I thought today was for celebration!

PRIESTESS  
Tonight.

*Cassandra groans.  
Priestess smiles and walks away. Cassandra goes back to grinding.  
Priestess steps into the shadows and watches Cassandra, worried.  
Cassandra looks into the fountain.*

CASSANDRA  
What about my future? What about my truth?  
Come on...

*She leans closer to the surface of the water. What she sees terrifies and frustrates her.*

CASSANDRA

Icicles on a rooftop; one falls; they all fall

Windshield wipers, back and forth, it's dark tonight snow looks like warp speed Ha Ha  
Very Funny Don't You Ever Have Something Original to Say *grab me my diet coke it's in  
the back could you just grab it* it rolled under the seat *can't you ever just help me out  
Christ* Icy roads Icy roads Icy roads (*sings*) *I'm a creeeeep, I'm a weirdooooo, what the  
hell am I doing heeeeere*, Watch what you're doing are you kidding I could do this with  
my eyes closed Welll Don't OK Just semi truck, red eye coffee, overtime, almost  
christmas, gotta get home gotta get home gotte get home *NO!*

*Cassandra slams her hands into the surface of the fountain, splashing water  
everywhere, knocking over the mortar and pestle, sending ground herbs flying.*

*Priestess leaves. Cassandra weeps.*

### **Scene 7.**

*Anne measures dry herbs into jars. Bridget grinds fresh herbs with a mortar & pestle.*

ANNE

Headache

BRIDGET

Tea: Catnip, sage, valerian root

ANNE

Cough

BRIDGET

Tea: Horehound, comfrey, peppermint, yarrow

ANNE

Toothache

BRIDGET

Raw garlic, whole cloves

*Pause. Anne looks at Bridget. Bridget looks up from grinding.*

BRIDGET

Chew it.

*Anne nods and goes back to measuring. Pause.*

BRIDGET

Folks are saying the bishop's here to stay, 'til he finds the witch that cursed the Duke's son's dick off.

ANNE

...*Folks* are saying.

BRIDGET

They are

ANNE

You mean John Davies is saying.

BRIDGET

I don't know what /John Davies—

ANNE

You've been talking to John Davies.

BRIDGET

No!

ANNE

You've been talking to that slimy rat John Davies and he's been filling your head with nightmares

BRIDGET

A man with no dick is hardly a nightmare

ANNE

What else are they good for?

*Bridget snorts.*

BRIDGET

People are saying it all over town.

ANNE

And you believe them.

BRIDGET

No!

ANNE

Whatever people are saying, there's no reason to let it be John Davies that says it to you.

BRIDGET

I'm not

ANNE

You gonna let him take you out behind his father's barn, too?

BRIDGET (*gross*)

`Course not.

Got enough babies, don't I?

*Anne nods curtly. They work.*

BRIDGET

I heard they've got a whole pack of torturers and churchmen come to find her—a witch or maybe a whole coven.

ANNE

You heard that

BRIDGET

I did

ANNE

From who.

BRIDGET

...John Davies.

ANNE

The Duke's son's dick is probably right where it's been all along—inside a parlor maid instead of inside his wife.

BRIDGET (*juicy gossip*)

No!

*Anne raises her eyebrows and keeps working.*

BRIDGET

...How do you know about the duke's son's dick?

ANNE

I know about the duke's son's wife.

BRIDGET *(laughs)*

John says folks'll say you're the witch, since you know so much.

ANNE

Did he?

BRIDGET

He said I oughta quit while I can, sign up to clean some rich man's house. No danger for a woman in that profession, he said.

*Anne snorts.*

BRIDGET

Well I told him he knows dogshit about what's dangerous for a woman.

ANNE

Bet he loved that

BRIDGET

Someone's gotta tell him

ANNE

Well it don't need to be you

BRIDGET

Why not?

ANNE

That man's trouble.

BRIDGET

He's been kind to me ever since Simon passed.

ANNE

And I suppose he likes you for your personality?

*Bridget sulks. They work.*

ANNE

...Will you find a new situation then?

Don't want to be associated with the local witch?

BRIDGET  
Why wouldn't I want that?

ANNE  
Don't play the fool.

BRIDGET  
Anyway you're not a witch.

ANNE  
That's not what John Davies says.

BRIDGET  
Fuck John Davies what do YOU say?

ANNE  
...I am not a witch.

BRIDGET (*disappointed*)  
...You're not?

ANNE  
No.

BRIDGET  
You can't scare me off.  
I'm nearly to the end of my training, aren't I?  
Don't I know about the remedies, and the birth, and where to find the herbs?  
I've got real skills, I'm gonna be an independent fucking businesswoman!

ANNE  
I know you will.

BRIDGET (*scoffs*)  
John Davies can lick my asshole.

ANNE  
Wouldn't let him do that if I were you.

*Bridget laughs. They work.*

ANNE  
Think my customers'll defect to you?

BRIDGET  
Well.

ANNE  
They might...You're sweeter and younger than me

BRIDGET  
I am not sweet!

ANNE  
Still, it's a disappointment—  
I was hoping to expand in a year or two—  
Find a partner for the business, someone I know was properly trained...

*Bridget jumps up.*

BRIDGET  
You mean it??

ANNE  
Well I didn't say tomorrow...

BRIDGET  
Well I didn't say you did.

*Bridget grins.  
Anne smiles—then back to work.*

**Scene 8.**

*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  
But I am 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  
I am surprised how fast the baby came.

GWYNETH  
I'm confident nine months is usual.

ANNE  
I just saw you a few days ago.

GWYNETH  
HOW SHOULD I KNOW WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOUR MAGIC SPELLS?

*The contraction is really bad. And still going. Anne rubs Gwyneth's back.*

ANNE  
I'm here to help.

GWYNETH (*Deep breath through the nose.*)  
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.*

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 almost screams from a sudden, painful contraction.  
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 wraps her arms around Gwyneth. Anne guides Gwyneth gently to a crouch.*

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 a PERFECT RED 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.*