

**STEVE - The Enquiry Into the
Affairs of Lord Septimus
Alaric von Gravenhurst,
Twice-Blooded, Keeper of the
Black Covenant**

A one-act play in five scenes

by

Gerard Dunning

Copyright © 2026,
Gerard Dunning

Web: gerarddunning.com

PO Box 5093, Erina Fair
ERINA

NSW 2260

AUSTRALIA

Phone: (61) 412 304437

E-mail:
gerard@gerarddunning.com

Cast of CharactersCharacter:

Steve / Lord Septimus Alaric von Gravenhurst. Twice-Blooded, Keeper of the Black Covenant, "The Undying"	(Male, ageless / appears 30s-50s) An ancient vampire of immense dignity and absolute sincerity. Septimus is formal, ceremonial, and deeply rooted in tradition. He is intelligent, observant, and emotionally contained.
Marshall	(Male, 40s-50s) A senior auditor. Efficient, polite, and quietly relentless.
Kline	(Female, late 20s-30s) A younger auditor. Attentive, methodical, and alert to detail.
The Recruiter	(Any gender, 30s-40s) Bright, upbeat, and relentlessly positive.
Employment Consultant	(Any gender, 40s-50s) Practical and mildly weary.
Internet Café Assistant	(Any gender, early 20s) Young, underpaid, and technologically fluent.
Daniel	(Male, 30s-40s) Warm, socially fluent, and instinctively perceptive.
Bartender	(Male, 20s-30s) Dry, observant, and rhythmically sharp.
Julian	(Male, 30s-40s) Impeccably composed and theatrically precise.
Patrons / Staff Roles (2~5)	(Male or Female) Flexible parts that support transitions, crowd moments, and the evolving social environments of the play.

Synopsis

A displaced aristocratic vampire, Lord Septimus Alaric von Gravenhurst, confronts the absurdities of the modern world in his quest for survival. From the rigidity of a tax audit to the bewildering landscape of contemporary employment, he struggles to compress centuries of existence into forms, bullet points, and social norms. Misunderstandings, miscommunication, and the clash of ancient ritual with modern systems generate comedy, while subtle cues hint at his true, immortal nature. Refuge and belonging are ultimately found in a nocturnal sanctuary, where identity can be chosen, and eccentricity is celebrated.

Scene

The play is structured in **five movements** that reflect key environments and narrative arcs:

The Audit: An ornate, bureaucratic space. Septimus faces auditors; his wealth, dignity, and understanding of time are systematically challenged.

The Labour Marketplace: A modular exhibition of employment booths. He encounters recruiters, benefits consultants, and a digital interface, each highlighting his displacement and comedic struggle with modernity.

The Sanctuary: A gay nightclub. Misrecognitions and social rituals unfold. Septimus experiences genuine connection and acceptance.

Reinvention: Within the nightclub, a makeover and participation in the community reveal adaptability, humour, and partial transformation.

The New Night: Bartender station. Night and ritual continue, but Septimus finds balance, friendship, and belonging without surrendering his essential self.

Time

The present

Disclaimer

This play is a work of fiction. All characters, names, businesses, events, and situations portrayed are entirely fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, or to actual events or establishments, is purely coincidental.

Creative Commons License for "Play Name"

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Terms of Use

You must give appropriate credit to the author, Gerard Dunning, in all promotional materials, programs, and acknowledgments related to this play.

You must credit the author prominently in the performance credits (e.g., "Written by Gerard Dunning").

This play may not be used for commercial purposes without explicit permission from the author.

Notification of Performance

Any individual or organisation intending to perform this play must notify the author prior to the performance, providing the following details:

Production Company Name

Director's Name

Full Cast Names

Performance Dates

Performance Location (including venue and city/town)

ShareAlike

If you adapt, remix, or build upon this work, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original.

No Additional Restrictions

You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

Contact

Please send performance details to: gerard@gerarddunning.com

Author's Note

Septimus is the central axis around which all other worlds, characters, and actions revolve. Every interaction, every sub-scene, every shift in lighting or tone is designed to reflect, challenge, or illuminate him. His presence anchors the play, and the audience experiences the absurdity, warmth, and displacement of the modern world through his perspective.

LORD SEPTIMUS ALARIC VON GRAVENHURST - Twice-Blooded, Keeper of the Black Covenant, "The Undying" (later known as **Steve**).

Septimus is ancient, dignified, and sincere. He is not camp, ironic, or knowingly theatrical. His humour comes from absolute dignity placed inside inappropriate modern systems, not from mockery or excess.

Septimus' formal title does not include "The Undying", but this is always self-added. Each time he pronounces it there should be a light beat, allowing the audience to register it as his badge of honour and subtle self-aware flourish. It reinforces his vampire status without ever needing explicit exposition.

Septimus believes deeply in hierarchy, earned titles, ritual, patience, and continuity. He does not posture; authority is internal, habitual, and absolute.

Highly intelligent and perceptive, he understands more than he shows. Confusion arises not from stupidity, but from encountering systems that ignore honour, longevity, or service.

A quiet loneliness lies beneath his certainty. Eternity has thinned his world rather than bored him. When wounded, he absorbs it with composure, making later warmth and connection genuinely earned.

- Regal, layered, flowing robes heavy with history and intent
- Moves deliberately, economically; pauses are active decisions
- Stillness is authoritative; every gesture claims space

As his name shortens through the play, so do his wardrobe, speech, and distance from others

By the time he becomes "Steve," the transformation feels like release rather than loss.

A note on the Marshall - Kline - Septimus Dynamic

Marshall and Kline serve as the calm, procedural, and immovable modern world, a counterpoint to Septimus' ancient dignity and self-assurance.

Marshall is efficient, precise, and slightly dry – the enforcer of systems. His seriousness highlights Septimus' absurdity without mockery, keeping the humour grounded.

Kline provides subtle commentary, warmth, or incredulity – a humanising lens for the audience.

Septimus interacts with them as a sovereign might with envoys: curious, dignified, occasionally exasperated, never deliberately funny.

The comedy and tension arise from their persistent, polite adherence to rules against Septimus' regal defiance. Every audit question, procedural demand, or expectation of compliance draws out his dignity, pride, and occasional flustered wit, creating a dynamic where the audience simultaneously sees the absurdity of the modern system and the depth of Septimus' character.

This dynamic sets the overall tone for the play.

Scene 1 - Order vs Eternity

SETTING: A vast, shadowed hall. Stone. Candles. Possibly a grand doorway upstage. We never see the castle; only this ceremonial room.

AT RISE: SEPTIMUS wears layered, flowing robes, ancient, regal, heavy with history. They trail. They command space. They require time. He is still. The silence is not empty; it is disciplined. After a moment, he speaks. Quietly. With care.

SEPTIMUS

Another night.

(He breathes in, as if confirming something)

The same moon. The same stars. Good.

(He moves deliberately, adjusting part of his attire; a clasp, a sleeve, a medallion whose meaning has been forgotten by everyone else)

I have outlived nations that announced themselves eternal. **(A beat)** I remember when night required courage.

(He considers this)

It still does. But no longer from the correct people.

(He crosses to a grand seat but does not sit)

Mortals believe eternity to be repetition. They imagine it dull. **(Genuinely puzzled)** It is not.

(A pause. He listens as a soldier might listen for movement beyond the walls)

Everything obeys a structure. Blood. Loyalty. Silence. **(Then, carefully)** Money.

(The word does not belong here. He knows it. He lifts a goblet; almost ceremonial)

SEPTIMUS

I am Lord Septimus Alaric von Gravenhurst. Twice-Blooded.
Keeper of the Black Covenant...

(A small, proud beat. He glances upward, lets it linger)

...The Undying.

(He allows the name to settle. It is interrupted by a knock. Sharp.
Modern. Incorrect. SEPTIMUS does not move at first. This is not fear.
It is offence)

No.

(The knock again. Louder. More confident)

No one knocks.

(He moves. His robes shift, pooling around him like a slow tide)

There is a gate. There is a bell. There is a sequence.

(Another knock. Then...)

MARSHALL

(Outside)

Mr Gravenhurst?

(SEPTIMUS closes his eyes. Just briefly)

SEPTIMUS

No.

(The light cools slightly; not dramatic, but administrative. AGENT
MARSHALL and AGENT KLINE appear at the edge of the space.

MARSHALL holds himself like someone who expects resistance. KLINE
observes with careful attention, already adapting.

They take in SEPTIMUS'S robes. Neither comments nor reacts)

KLINE

Lord Septimus Alaric von Gravenhurst?

(SEPTIMUS straightens; relieved by the effort)

SEPTIMUS

Yes.

MARSHALL

We're here regarding your tax affairs.

(Silence. SEPTIMUS studies them fully now. Not predatorily. Judicially)

SEPTIMUS

You have travelled a great distance to be mistaken.

KLINE

We followed the address provided. (Checks his paperwork) It simply says: "the old place."

SEPTIMUS

This is not a place. It is a dominion.

MARSHALL

Right.

SEPTIMUS

I do not offer tribute.

KLINE

This isn't tribute.

MARSHALL

It's an audit.

(The word hangs. SEPTIMUS turns it over carefully.)

SEPTIMUS gestures; measured, ceremonial, toward the seating. The gesture suggests command rather than hospitality. MARSHALL sits, already removing his laptop, opening it with practised efficiency.

KLINE remains standing, observant, hands free. SEPTIMUS does not sit. He never sits)

SEPTIMUS

You refer to the sum of my dominions. The holdings maintained across centuries. The agreements sworn with rulers who are now dust. **(A beat)** The wealth that grows precisely because it is left alone.

(He nods, satisfied)

Those affairs.

MARSHALL

We'll need to see them.

(MARSHALL looks directly at SEPTIMUS and pauses. SEPTIMUS' expression does not change, but something adjusts internally)

SEPTIMUS

Before we proceed **(With formality, not ego, begins to move)** you will address me correctly.

MARSHALL

Of course.

SEPTIMUS

I am Lord Septimus Alaric von Gravenhurst. Twice-Blooded.
Keeper of the Black Covenant...

(A beat, leaning slightly forward)

...The Undying.

(MARSHALL types. Stops)

KLINE

Thank you. For the purposes of today, we'll be referring to
you as Mr Gravenhurst.

(A flicker of genuine hurt from SEPTIMUS)

SEPTIMUS

No.

KLINE

I understand. But our system caps at thirty characters.

(A pause. SEPTIMUS considers this sincerely)

SEPTIMUS

Then your system was not built for endurance.

(KLINE smiles. Not mockingly)

MARSHALL

This is a standard audit.

KLINE

Let's start simply. Primary source of income?

SEPTIMUS

Time.

MARSHALL

Time isn't income.

SEPTIMUS

It has proven extremely reliable.

KLINE

Employment. Investments. Property. Inheritance.

SEPTIMUS

Yes.

MARSHALL

Which one?

SEPTIMUS

All.

(MARSHALL types. Stops again)

MARSHALL

Property acquisition dates?

SEPTIMUS

Before your calendar learned how to count properly.

KLINE

We'll need a year.

SEPTIMUS

I took it. **(Beat)** A year is not something I am waiting to give.

MARSHALL

I'll mark "pre-1900."

SEPTIMUS

I was already old then.

(MARSHALL notes this carefully)

KLINE

(Reading from her case notes)

You've listed deductions for "blood rites."

(Still typing)

For what purpose?

SEPTIMUS

Continuation.

(KLINE nods. MARSHALL stops typing. Pauses)

MARSHALL

Do you understand what a financial year is?

SEPTIMUS

I understand years.

KLINE

They conclude.

(SEPTIMUS stills)

SEPTIMUS

No.

MARSHALL

They do.

SEPTIMUS

(Firmly)

Time does not conclude.

KLINE

Our forms do.

(SEPTIMUS flinches. Robes rustle sharply. He is irritated)

MARSHALL

This account here... No declared activity for one hundred and twelve years.

SEPTIMUS

I was in slumber.

KLINE

That is not recognised as an exemption.

(Silence. For the first time SEPTIMUS is not offended. He is uncertain)

MARSHALL

You exist within the jurisdiction.

SEPTIMUS

I existed before it.

KLINE

But you exist now.

(Lands heavily)

MARSHALL

Based on our findings...

KLINE

...and the absence of documentation...

MARSHALL

...we're reassessing retroactively.

SEPTIMUS

Retroactively.

KLINE

Yes.

SEPTIMUS

How far?

MARSHALL

As far as records permit.

(SEPTIMUS relaxes briefly)

SEPTIMUS

Then I am not concerned.

(KLINE closes the folder)

KLINE

Our records are extensive.

(Beat)

MARSHALL

You'll receive notice of seizure.

SEPTIMUS

Of what.

KLINE

Everything.

(Silence)

SEPTIMUS

I am undying.

MARSHALL

We accept that.

KLINE

But you are not exempt.

(MARSHALL stands. Puts his laptop in his bag. SEPTIMUS remains still with his robes pooled around him, suddenly heavy)

MARSHALL

This interview is now on record, Mr Gravenhurst. From this point forward, everything you say will be treated as a formal statement, reviewed in standard time, and assessed under contemporary financial law. We'll proceed methodically, without exception, until your affairs are fully accounted for.

(SEPTIMUS hesitates, remaining still centre stage where he will still be for the opening of scene 2. KLINE and MARSHALL exit as the lights fade)

Scene 2 - The Maze of Modern Work

SETTING: A contemporary, modular interior that will later resolve into a labour-marketplace environment. At first, the space is indistinct; an empty holding area, stripped of history or ornament. The architecture is temporary: portable walls, industrial carpet, fluorescent lighting. Nothing here is hostile, but nothing is reverent.

AT RISE: Black. Silence. A single fluorescent light snaps on, centre stage. SEPTIMUS stands beneath it, exactly as we last saw him: regal, composed. He has not moved since the previous scene. The contrast is immediate and unmistakable. The surrounding space remains dim. No booths are yet visible. Only the hum of the light, faint electronic sounds in the distance, and the sense that time has advanced without ceremony. SEPTIMUS listens. He does not yet understand where he is – only that he is no longer where he belongs.

SEPTIMUS

(Quietly)

This is not a dominion.

(He turns. Slowly. The light widens. What emerges is not chaos, but order; the wrong kind. Booths. Modular. Identical. Portable. Pull-up banners. Plastic chairs. Clipboards resting where thrones should be. None of them are lit yet. SEPTIMUS steps forward. His boots echo too loudly. He stops. Looks down at the floor. Carpet. Industrial. A tiny, private recalibration)

SEPTIMUS

I was... summoned.

(He straightens his robes; a habitual gesture that now feels ceremonial without an audience. A beat. One booth snaps on. Bright. Cheerful. Brutally present. A banner reads: "EMPLOYMENT SERVICES". SEPTIMUS squints at it. He reads it aloud, carefully, as if it might be a spell)

SEPTIMUS

Employment. (Beat) Services.

(He considers the words)

SEPTIMUS

(To himself, sincere)

Very well.

(He steps forward. As he does, the next booth flickers to life. Then another. Then another. The space assembles itself around him; not hostile, not reverent; simply operational. The audience now understands. SEPTIMUS does not. He moves deeper in, robes brushing against signage)

SEPTIMUS

(Calling out, politely)

Who presides here?

(No answer. A printer chimes. Somewhere, a keyboard clicks. SEPTIMUS pauses just long enough to decide this is not an ambush. He lifts his chin. And enters the first booth)

(BOOTH ONE - RECRUITMENT AGENCY. A booth snaps to life in cold white light. Behind it the RECRUITER, gender-neutral, ageless, and pleasant. A banner reads: FIND YOUR FUTURE)

RECRUITER

Welcome! What brings you in today?

SEPTIMUS

I have been... compelled.

RECRUITER

Great. Let's start with your name?

SEPTIMUS

(Automatic, ceremonial)

Lord Septimus Alaric von Gravenhurst, Twice-Blooded, Keeper of the Black Covenant, The Und...

RECRUITER

(Smiling, typing)

Let's just go with Septimus for now.

(A tiny beat)

SEPTIMUS

(Accepting, with dignity)

Very well.

RECRUITER

What are your skills?

SEPTIMUS

I command loyalty. I inspire fear. I endure.

RECRUITER

Okay. And anything transferable?

SEPTIMUS

I have governed estates for centuries.

RECRUITER

Property management?

SEPTIMUS

Yes. With wolves.

(The RECRUITER nods, types)

RECRUITER

Are you a team player?

SEPTIMUS

I have led armies.

RECRUITER

Perfect. We'll say "collaborative leadership experience."

(SEPTIMUS nods solemnly. The booth dims.

BOOTH TWO - JOB DESCRIPTIONS. Another booth lights. A digital board scrolls job ads. SEPTIMUS steps closer, reading aloud)

SEPTIMUS

"Dynamic self-starter." (Beat) I do not start myself dynamically.

(He scrolls)

"Fast-paced environment." I am undead.

(Scroll)

"Must be comfortable with change."

(Quietly, wounded)

I am not.

(A longer beat. He scrolls again)

"Entry level."

(The board keeps scrolling. SEPTIMUS stops trying to read. The booth flickers out.

BOOTH THREE - EMPLOYMENT CONSULTANT. Warm light. A desk. A chair. The CONSULTANT gestures for SEPTIMUS to sit. He does not)

CONSULTANT

Full legal name?

SEPTIMUS

(Centering himself)

Lord Septimus Alaric von Gravenhurst, Twice-Blooded..

CONSULTANT

I'll stop you there. (Typing) First name: Septimus. Middle initial?

SEPTIMUS

I have several.

CONSULTANT

Great. I'll choose one.

(Types)

SEPTIMUS

(Carefully)

Which one have you chosen?

CONSULTANT

(Checks screen)

"S."

(A beat)

SEPTIMUS

...for which name.

CONSULTANT

All of them.

(The **CONSULTANT** presses **ENTER**. A small confirmation sound)

CONSULTANT

Have you considered unemployment benefits?

SEPTIMUS

Benefits?

CONSULTANT

Based on your situation, you may be eligible for income support.

SEPTIMUS

Yes.

CONSULTANT

Yes?

SEPTIMUS

I accept.

CONSULTANT

It's not an offer.

SEPTIMUS

Then why are we discussing it?

CONSULTANT

Income support is a temporary payment. It's designed to assist you while you look for work.

SEPTIMUS

Ah. (**Studying the CONSULTANT**) You mean patronage.

CONSULTANT

What? No.

SEPTIMUS

You grant me resources while I pursue my true calling.

CONSULTANT

You actively apply for jobs.

SEPTIMUS

Naturally.

CONSULTANT

Attend interviews.

SEPTIMUS

If challenged.

CONSULTANT

And accept suitable employment.

SEPTIMUS

If it pleases me.

(A beat)

CONSULTANT

That's not how it works.

SEPTIMUS

It is exactly how it has always worked.

CONSULTANT

This isn't feudal Europe.

SEPTIMUS

I know. **(Gravely)** It is poorer.

(The CONSULTANT types)

CONSULTANT

You'll need to demonstrate effort.

SEPTIMUS

I have endured three plagues, and one very disappointing renaissance.

CONSULTANT

You'll need to apply for at least ten jobs a week.

SEPTIMUS

(Smiles)

I am excellent at waiting.

CONSULTANT

Waiting doesn't count.

SEPTIMUS

It always has.

(The CONSULTANT stops typing)

CONSULTANT

Income support is not payment for doing nothing.

SEPTIMUS

(Disappointed)

Then you have misnamed it. **(A beat)** But. **(Considering)** If this system rewards persistence without outcome... I may find it... agreeable.

CONSULTANT

It doesn't.

SEPTIMUS

We will see.

(The CONSULTANT presses ENTER. The confirmation sound again)

CONSULTANT

You'll be notified.

SEPTIMUS

Of my patron.

CONSULTANT

Of your obligations.

(SEPTIMUS nods, satisfied – utterly misunderstanding. The booth light fades

BOOTH FOUR - INTERNET CAFÉ. Blue light. A single computer terminal. SEPTIMUS approaches it as if it might strike him)

ASSISTANT

Hello. Can I help guide you through creating your profile?

SEPTIMUS

(Eyeing the screen)

Guide? **(Beat)** You may begin.

ASSISTANT

Okay. First, your name.

SEPTIMUS

Lord Septimus Alaric von Gravenhurst, Twice-Blooded, Keeper of the Black Covenant...

(A deliberate pause, surveying the room)

...The Undying.

ASSISTANT

Right... that's long. Most systems limit names to 30 characters.

SEPTIMUS

Thirty? **(Eyes widen, gestures dramatically)** You wound me.
(Gestures at screen) Do you understand what I am?

ASSISTANT

Uh... can you spell it for me?

SEPTIMUS

Spell it? **(Beat, haughty)** I do not spell my own name. I pronounce it with reverence.

ASSISTANT

(Typing hesitantly, mutters)

Right... okay... the system's not going to like that. I'll just... abbreviate.

SEPTIMUS

Abbreviate? You presume to abridge eternity?

(Gestures at the screen as if it's a misbehaving servant)

ASSISTANT

We can try... "Seth G."

SEPTIMUS

(Aghast)

Only for your convenience, not mine. **(To himself)** This is tyranny masquerading as civility.

ASSISTANT

Type it here, please.

SEPTIMUS

I do not type. **(Beat)** My hands are for ceremony and combat.

ASSISTANT

Okay, I'll type it for you.

SEPTIMUS

You may... attempt.

(Hovering over the keyboard, robes brushing keys, muttering arcane-sounding corrections)

ASSISTANT

(Reading from the screen)

"Enter your employment history."

SEPTIMUS

Employment history? **(Beat, dramatic)** I have existed beyond employment. I have directed kingdoms, commanded armies, witnessed empires crumble.

ASSISTANT

We need specifics - dates, positions.

SEPTIMUS

Dates... positions... **(Gestures dramatically)** I was sovereign over centuries. I require... one line.

ASSISTANT

Just some bullets.

SEPTIMUS

Bullets? **(Beat)** Ah. Weapons!

ASSISTANT

Ah, no. Just brief points.

SEPTIMUS

(Consulting himself)

Very well. I shall condense eternity into... three lines.

(He leans toward the screen, speaking as the assistant types)

SEPTIMUS

Line one: Conquered kingdoms.

Line two: Endured insurrections, famine...

Line three: Maintained dignity against mortal frivolity, and preserved the vitality of my own... essence.

ASSISTANT

Um, it says "Job description does not meet minimum word count."

SEPTIMUS

It is exacting. It is perfect. It is eternal.

ASSISTANT

Minimum... words. Ah, can you expand... slightly?

SEPTIMUS

Expand? **(Beat, incredulous)** Must everything be vulgar?

ASSISTANT

Just add more detail.

SEPTIMUS

(Leaning back, hands sweeping dramatically)

Very well.

(Enjoying his own creativity)

Line four: Maintained dominion over darkness in all its forms - while mortals flounder in daylight's petty matters, and I muse quietly on the absurdity of their ambitions, which pale beside the eternity I endure.

ASSISTANT

Right... so... "Seth" then?

SEPTIMUS

(Gritting teeth, rolling eyes, gestures at screen)

You will call me nothing less than Septimus. **(Pauses, mutters)**
...though it pains me to yield even a fraction of my name.

ASSISTANT

(Typing)

S-S... got it.

SEPTIMUS

(Leans closer, conspiratorial)

Professional summary... let it be a declaration of conquest, survival, mastery over mortality itself! Not... this... mundane chatter about skills and duties.

ASSISTANT

Umm... so... "Summary of Experience" then?

(SEPTIMUS pauses, unsure of how to respond)

ASSISTANT

You're... doing fine, Seth.

SEPTIMUS

(Looks up sharply, horror flickering)

Seth...! **(Beat, then sighs, slumping slightly)** Yes, yes, for now... call me... "Seth G". **(Gestures vaguely at screen)** But, know this: I do not submit lightly to mortal devices.

ASSISTANT

Alright, next section - skills?

SEPTIMUS

(Skimming the screen, incredulous)

Skills? **(Pauses dramatically, then softens)** Very well. **(Beat, mutters)** I have survived empires... and now... I must list... skills... in... bullets.

ASSISTANT

Just type them in... Whatever comes to mind.

SEPTIMUS

(Murmurs, pacing)

Leadership... diplomacy... stealth... endurance... mastery of the night... patience beyond reckoning... **(Gestures at screen)** Yes... that will do... for now...

ASSISTANT

Excellent. Now **(Pauses, unsure of how best continue)**
education?

SEPTIMUS

(Leans closer to the ASSISTANT, voice dripping with irony)

Education... learned from kings and sages... from battlefields and
tombs... from silence and shadow... **(Beat, muttering)** Will
"eternal observation of mortal folly" suffice?

ASSISTANT

(Typing, nodding)

Perfect... **(under breath)** Seth...

SEPTIMUS

(Throws hands in the air, pacing, robes sweeping)

I... I am undone. I have compressed centuries into... boxes. I am...
exhausted... spiritually depleted...

ASSISTANT

(Looking up)

Well, that's the basics. You're... done for now.

SEPTIMUS

(SEPTIMUS remains center stage, still draped in his flowing robes, motionless except for the faint shift of his gaze toward the horizon.

The light subtly cools and dims, suggesting the approach of evening. His posture is regal yet exhausted, commanding attention even in stillness. The assistant and booth lighting fade fully, leaving only SEPTIMUS illuminated in a soft, lingering pool of light)

Night. Its shadow... patient... inevitable... I must... find sanctuary. **(Gestures vaguely to audience, robes pooled around him, still centre stage)** Somewhere... where darkness... is sovereign... where the night... understands...

(A long pause, letting the weight of the night and his search for refuge settle. No movement off-stage. This establishes him as the anchor for Scene 3)

Scene 3 - The Sanctuary

SETTING: The modular booths fade into shadow. A single neon glow flickers to life upstage: *PULSE ETERNAL OPEN LATE*

AT RISE: SEPTIMUS remains exactly where Scene Two left him, centre stage. A low bass hum begins, almost imperceptible at first. Not overwhelming. A heartbeat. SEPTIMUS has not moved. He senses it.

SEPTIMUS

(Quietly)

...It gathers.

(The glow strengthens. Silhouettes cross behind him, figures in dark clothing, leather, velvet, mesh, silver chains. Their aesthetic echoes his own, but lived-in, contemporary. He studies them)

SEPTIMUS

(Soft wonder)

Black silk. Silver at the throat. Boots built for conquest.

(A man laughs. Another adjusts eyeliner in a phone reflection. SEPTIMUS straightens, instinctively regal)

SEPTIMUS

A citadel.

(He steps toward the glow.)

TRANSITION: The neon intensifies. The bass becomes music. A subtle lighting shift suggests interior without changing the set: warmer tones, practical glow, a bar surface suggested by a single lit edge. The outside becomes inside.

INSIDE THE CLUB: The energy is social, not chaotic. People talk close. Laughter. Ease. A BARTENDER wipes a glass with ritual efficiency. SEPTIMUS enters cautiously, but not timidly. He is assessing)

SEPTIMUS

(Softly, to himself)

Order. Structure.

(DANIEL, confident, amused, clocks him immediately)

DANIEL

Nice look.

SEPTIMUS

(Gravely)

It is not a look.

DANIEL

(Studying him, softer)

You rehearsed that, didn't you?

(DANIEL steps closer, not predatory, simply interested)

You new here?

SEPTIMUS

I have endured here for several moments.

DANIEL

That tracks.

(A small laugh from nearby. Not mocking. Warm)

DANIEL

You here alone?

SEPTIMUS

I require no escort.

DANIEL

(DANIEL circles him slightly with playful appraisal)

So what are you into?

(SEPTIMUS stiffens. This is language he recognises, but misplaces)

SEPTIMUS

(Almost ceremonial)

Loyalty. Oaths sworn without trembling. The sharing of blood..

(DANIEL nearly chokes on his drink)

DANIEL

Whoa...! Okay... We just met.

(Laughter from two nearby PATRONS. SEPTIMUS misreads this entirely)

SEPTIMUS

(Stepping forward, intense but sincere)

If you seek alliance, speak plainly. If you seek devotion...
(Beat. He kneels slightly, hand to chest) I do not offer it lightly.

(The music dips for a breath. The club-goers freeze just long enough to absorb the tableau. Then laughter. Not cruel. Delighted)

DANIEL

Oh no. Don't kneel. That escalates quickly. (Quieter, just for him) You don't have to earn your place.

(DANIEL studies him more carefully now. Something shifts. Curiosity replaces amusement)

What's your name?

SEPTIMUS

Lord Septimus Alaric von Gravenhurst. Twice-Blooded. Keeper of the Black Covenant... **(He gathers himself. A small beat)** The Undying.

DANIEL

"Septimus". We're keeping all of it?

SEPTIMUS

Yes.

DANIEL

(Extends a hand)

I'm Daniel.

(SEPTIMUS looks at the hand as though it is a diplomatic offering. He takes it. He does not crush it. A beat of connection. BARTENDER interjects. DANIEL does not retreat. He stays beside SEPTIMUS at the bar)

BARTENDER

Well hello, midnight. What are we drinking?

SEPTIMUS

I seek sustenance.

BARTENDER

You've come to the right altar. Let's see... I can offer you a Long Slow Comfortable, a Dark and Dirty, a Between the Sheets, a French Kiss, a Screaming Orgasm, or... if you're pacing yourself... a Virgin Sin.

(A small cluster nearby begins to listen)

SEPTIMUS

(Gravely, concerned)

Your rituals appear... unnecessarily complicated.

BARTENDER

Sweetheart, you should see Saturdays.

DANIEL

(To BARTENDER)

He's new. Be gentle. Centuries old but emotionally fresh.

SEPTIMUS

This "Between the Sheets." A battlefield manoeuvre?

BARTENDER

If you play your cards right.

(More PATRONS turn)

SEPTIMUS

And this "Screaming Orgasm." **(Beat, troubled)** Is medical attention required?

(The surrounding group laughs openly now)

DANIEL

Only if it lasts more than four hours.

SEPTIMUS

Then we shall avoid it. I am conserving strength.

DANIEL

Relax. You're safe here.

(The circle widens)

BARTENDER

Alright. What would you really like then?

SEPTIMUS

Something red. Something fortified. Something that has known suffering.

(The BARTENDER lights up)

BARTENDER

Oh, honey. You're a Bloody Mary.

(He builds it with theatrical ceremony, salt, spice, flourish)

Extra bite?

SEPTIMUS

Always.

(The drink slides across. SEPTIMUS studies it like a sacred object. He tastes. A long pause)

SEPTIMUS

...It is aggressive.

DANIEL

You like aggressive.

(By now a small group has formed. People lean in. Phones half-raised but forgotten. He is more interesting live)

PATRON

(To DANIEL)

Where did you find him?

DANIEL

I didn't. He manifested.

(To SEPTIMUS. Watching him closely)

So tell me, Sep... is that the look, or are you always this ceremonial?

SEPTIMUS

I have always belonged to the night.

DANIEL

Belonging to something isn't the same as hiding in it. Trust me.

SEPTIMUS

The night holds Loyalty. Ritual. The slow accumulation of power over centuries.

DANIEL

You don't have to win here.

(JULIAN appears at the edge. Observing, intrigued. Not entering yet. Watching potential. DANIEL clocks JULIAN)

DANIEL

(To JULIAN)

Julian. Don't. **(Beat)** This is Septimus. **(Beat)** He's not a project.

SEPTIMUS

(Looking around; the crowd, the warmth, the attention freely given)

They gather...

BARTENDER

Honey, you're the main event. Presence is enough. (To DANIEL)
Don't lose him.

(The bass swells. The group tightens around him, not worship, not mockery. Interest. Energy. Belonging. The BARTENDER watches the growing circle)

DANIEL

(Softly, to SEPTIMUS)

You hear that?

SEPTIMUS

A sanctuary... that gathers its own court.

DANIEL

(To SEPTIMUS after a long beat)

Stay. Just for tonight.

(Lights hold SEPTIMUS centre, not isolated. He is the gravitational point)

Scene 4 - Reinvention

SETTING: The club continues from Scene Three.

AT RISE: SEPTIMUS is still the gravitational centre, crowd orbiting. Music pulses. Suddenly a spotlight snap. Music needle-scratch drop.

Out of the crowd emerges JULIAN. Impeccably dressed. Controlled. Gliding. He surveys SEPTIMUS like a curator discovering an unframed masterpiece. A long, deliberate pause.

JULIAN

Oh. **(Beat)** Oh, this is criminal.

(The crowd parts slightly. SEPTIMUS turns, slow, regal)

BARTENDER

Here we go. He can smell untreated fabric at fifty paces.

(Julian circles SEPTIMUS once. Not touching yet)

JULIAN

Who wrapped you, Seppy? A monastery?

SEPTIMUS

These garments denote rank.

JULIAN

They denote insulation.

(He flicks a heavy sleeve)

You are not mysterious. You are upholstered.

DANIEL

(Quietly, to SEPTIMUS)

He's not wrong.

(The crowd laughs affectionately. SEPTIMUS does not recoil. He studies this man carefully)

BARTENDER

(To JULIAN)

Don't start.

JULIAN

I haven't even begun. *(To SEPTIMUS, intensely)* Do you know what you are?

SEPTIMUS

I am Twice-Blooded. Keeper of the..

JULIAN

No. *(Steps closer)* You are a silhouette begging to be edited.

(He steps directly in front of SEPTIMUS now. Measured. Appraising)

DANIEL

You don't have to defend it.

SEPTIMUS

My habits have endured centuries.

JULIAN

Yes. And so has mayonnaise. We still improve it.

(The crowd howls. SEPTIMUS almost smiles... almost. JULIAN reaches and lifts the outermost robe slightly)

SEPTIMUS

Careful.

JULIAN

I am always careful. (Beat) I am also always correct.

(JULIAN claps once. Music shifts to something playful and makeover-montage ready)

JULIAN

Right. We begin with subtraction.

(To SEPTIMUS, softer now)

Trust me.

DANIEL

(Softly)

You can.

(A beat. SEPTIMUS considers him. This is not bureaucracy. This is challenge. He removes the outermost layer himself. The crowd cheers. JULIAN closes his eyes briefly; reverently)

JULIAN

Oh, yes!

(Blackout snap into the first mini-transition)

Transition 1 - The Reveal

(Lighting snap. Music shifts to something thumping but playful. SEPTIMUS stands stiffly, robe half-removed. Julian circles him like a stylist on a reality show)

JULIAN

Drama! Delusion!

(He pulls the outer robe cleanly off. The crowd gasps. Underneath: fitted black shirt)

BARTENDER

Oh. He's got shoulders.

DANIEL

There you are.

JULIAN

No capes. We are not fighting Batman.

(Lights snap)

Transition 2 - The Boots

(Lighting flicker. JULIAN kneels, inspecting SEPTIMUS' heavy boots)

JULIAN

These have trampled villages.

SEPTIMUS

Two, that I recall.

DANIEL

We're retiring the war crimes.

JULIAN

...and upgrading to something that tramples hearts.

(Boot swap, sleeker black boots appear, quick-change gag. SEPTIMUS stands taller, accidentally more attractive. Collective reaction from the room)

BARTENDER

I need hazard pay.

Transition 3 - The Smile

(Music softens. JULIAN positions SEPTIMUS' face toward the audience)

JULIAN

Smile.

(SEPTIMUS bares teeth - full predator. Screams of mock terror)

Less 'castle raid.' More 'text me later.' (To DANIEL) What do you think Daniel?

DANIEL

Just... soften the edges.

(SEPTIMUS attempts again. It's terrible. The third attempt is... almost human. Small applause. He is confused by applause)

SEPTIMUS

Why do they cheer surrender?

DANIEL

Because you're letting them see you.

JULIAN

You're arriving, Seppy.

(Lighting snap)

Transition 4 - Behind the Bar

(New night. Music heavier. SEPTIMUS behind the bar in fitted black shirt and apron. He shakes a cocktail with ritual solemnity, as though invoking storm clouds)

SEPTIMUS

Ice must be respected.

DANIEL

(Curious)

You sound happy.

(SEPTIMUS strains, garnishes with surgical precision. Slides drink. The PATRON drinks. Eyes widen)

PATRON

Okay but that's dangerously hot.

(Another PATRON pushes forward. Then another. JULIAN watches, smug)

JULIAN

See? We refined the packaging.

(BARTENDER clocks the growing line)

Transition 5 - The Name

(Music shift, lighter, buoyant)

PATRON

Seppy! Two more of the spicy things!

(SEPTIMUS pauses. He could correct them. He doesn't)

SEPTIMUS

Of course.

(JULIAN tilts head)

JULIAN

It suits you.

(DANIEL shows agreement. SEPTIMUS considers)

SEPTIMUS

It is... efficient.

Transition 6 - The Final Layer

(Another night. SEPTIMUS now in dark fitted jacket. Clean lines. No flow. JULIAN removes the final trailing inner lining from his costume. Just a small strip of old fabric. Handing it back to SEPTIMUS)

JULIAN

Yours.

(SEPTIMUS nods. A PATRON approaches casually)

PATRON

Looking good.

(Music lowers. SEPTIMUS holds still. JULIAN watches but does not interfere)

SEPTIMUS

...You're welcome.

(Music rises. The crowd cheers without realising what just happened. JULIAN steps back. His work is done)

(DANIEL watches carefully. Lights hold on SEPTIMUS. He pauses, no longer embalmed. Not erased. Integrated)

Scene 5 - The New Night

SETTING: The club in full swing. Music alive. Lights warm, not gothic, not harsh. Artificial, unapologetic, modern.

AT RISE: SEPTIMUS, now in fitted black shirt, dark trousers, sleeves rolled, moves behind the bar with grounded confidence. No robes. No armour. He is enormous. He commands space without trying. He shakes a cocktail with ceremonial gravity. The BARTENDER remains involved, observing SEPTIMUS as the talented new hire. Nothing more.

SEPTIMUS

(To a waiting PATRON)

Your usual. Extra spice... You pretend you cannot handle it.

PATRON

I can't.

SEPTIMUS

You return nonetheless.

(He slides the drink. Another PATRON leans in)

SEPTIMUS

You are reconciled with your ex. You will regret this by Thursday.

PATRON

Stop knowing things.

SEPTIMUS

Patterns are lazy.

(Laughter. He moves with surprising agility, pivot, shake, pour. People gravitate toward him instinctively. A new customer approaches)

PATRON

What's good?

(The crowd answers before he can)

CROWD

Bloody Mary!

(SEPTIMUS pauses, deadpan)

SEPTIMUS

It is aggressive. It improves with salt.

(The crowd cheers. He prepares it with liturgical precision. Slides it across. Beat)

SEPTIMUS

Respect the ice.

DANIEL

He means it.

(Music shifts with heavier bass. DANIEL pulls him from behind the bar)

You work too hard.

(The name lands. No hesitation now. He steps out. At first stiff, controlled. Then something unlocks. His movements are grand, theatrical, absurdly committed. Half gothic waltz, half club stomp. It should be unexpectedly excellent. He spins DANIEL dramatically. He dips him, who absolutely did not expect it. The room loses it. JULIAN watches with delight)

JULIAN

(To BARTENDER)

There.

(Music softens slightly but not stopping. SEPTIMUS leans on the bar with DANIEL. Sweat. Alive)

DANIEL

You're good at this.

SEPTIMUS

At ritual?

DANIEL

(Smiling)

At people.

(A small pause. DANIEL exits. A phone buzzes on the bar. A bureaucratic notification tone. SEPTIMUS glances at it. Does not flinch. He turns it face down. He chooses the room. Lights gradually lifts, not dark, but practical. Music fades. People linger. Chairs stack. JULIAN air-kisses him without words)

SEPTIMUS

Go home, Julian.

(The BARTENDER tosses him the keys)

BARTENDER

You lock up.

(SEPTIMUS catches them. The room empties slowly. One last PATRON exits)

PATRON

(A PATRON who has not as yet spoken)

Night, Steve.

SEPTIMUS

(He stands alone. Artificial light hums. Not moonlight. Fluorescent. He looks around the empty room as he replies to the departing PATRON)

Night.

(SEPTIMUS walks centre stage. No robes. No performance. He removes his apron and carefully folds it. Places it on the bar. A beat. He looks toward the door as someone who will return tomorrow. He inhales)

Tomorrow then.

(Curtain)