

DISRUPTING BEAUTY IN THE PLIANT GIRLS THROUGH COSTUME DESIGN

By

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Soli Deo Gloria.

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Major: Theatre

ABSTRACT

Every article of clothing that you wear or do not wear communicates to the people around you. In costume design these choices are researched, well thought out, and deliberately chosen to tell a specific story. The purpose of this thesis is to document the process of costume design of *The Pliant Girls* by Meghan Brown, presented by the University of Florida's School of Theatre and Dance, as directed by Michelle Bellaver, with costume design by Helen Dominguez, lighting design by Morgan Lessman, and scenic design by Kaitlyn Hannah. The colors, cuts, fabrics, and textures of each costume piece were chosen to support either looking at beauty or feeling beauty. The theories of Male Gaze and Female Gaze play a prominent roll in the costume design of *The Pliant Girls* and this thesis demonstrates how research fuels the details chosen to communicate and challenge an audience about its preconceived ideas of beauty standards.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

How do you honor the female form without objectifying it? What does a wedding dress communicate about the wearer? These are some of the questions that came up while reading the script for *The Pliant Girls* over a year ago. With sticky notes on cork board and strings to connect couples the design process began with observations and musings, bridal magazine clippings and excitement. When design meetings in October 2023 began the director's concept was far different than my own. Different question came up. Who decides what is pretty? Are pants feminine? What does it look like if marriage is a trap? These questions lead down a very different path and to a very different design.

Over the next few weeks meetings with the director and other designers began to flesh out what it means to design in two different worlds. One world of Male Gaze and looking or being looked at and the other world of being brought into feeling with. This was not a simple design. It took more effort to be creative within strict limitations and counter cultural concepts than any other show I have designed. The midpoint production assessment November 8, 2023 created another shift of focus and the more effort went into the females in their Female Gaze world. One week before final design presentations on December 6, 2023, there was still questions about one character, Philomena's costume and another shift was made. The perseverance of figuring out how to communicate power dynamics and dichotomy of Gaze within the costumes continued through dress rehearsal. This perseverance however ended with a striking production.

The Pliant Girls opened on Thursday, March 21, 2024. It ran for 8 performances and closed on Friday, March 29, 2024. The reviews were overwhelmingly positive. One person said, "Saw your work last night. A stunner. Like literally and figuratively. Which is (I think) what we often strive to do as theatre artists. To stun. To sometimes daze. To sometimes astonish. The whole is even greater than the sum of your glorious parts—and that's saying something. I will remember it for years to come. Thank you for that."

The following is the process it took to get to, stunning.

CHAPTER 2

THE PLIANT GIRLS,

An Adaptation(ish) of Aeschylus' "The Suppliants", By Meghan Brown

Synopsis

"Help us! Help us! Help us! Save us! Save us! Save us! Please! Please! Please!" (Brown)

The women call out to the gods in desperation as *The Pliant Girls* begins. Courtney, Leta, Philomena, Arianna, and Kay, five women who are the representatives of fifty women who have been raised as sisters, are in the middle of a crisis. Their pleas for rescue are met by a deep voice who tries to reason with them about why he cannot help them. They killed fifty men, forty-nine to be exact. The women plead that their unique and complicated situation warranted the murders. The Voice responds that if they can help him to understand the situation then maybe he can help them, save them.

Kay steps forward first. She describes what it is like to live on an island with fifty sisters. What it is like to be raised poor by a single dad. She tells us what her sisters are like and that she doesn't fit in. The island is small and limiting and the boys come to visit in boats. One night Kay gets home and their whole world is turned upside down by the announcement that they are all to be married to one of their fifty male cousins. Dad assures them that contract is for their benefit because they will be cared for financially for the rest of their lives and infidelity is punishable by death. The contract is binding however and while the sisters begin to panic the men arrive for "the picking" (Brown).

Five men enter on a runway while the women wait, trapped. Marcus introduces himself first with pride and self-assurance and chooses Courtney at first sight. Courtney responds with a promise to end him, but they still leave together. Kem steps up next and while he is unsure and sensitive to the situation he quickly calls out "I'll take the pretty one" (Brown) while pointing to Philomena. They also exit together. Next Dean tells a misogynistic, sexual joke. When no one laughs, he gets angry and chooses Arianna, the youngest. Kay tries to intervene, but Dean reveals that they have already met, and he wants a young, inexperienced girl and Kay is neither. Dean and Arianna leave together. Alexander steps forward next and proceeds to dance and make light of the situation. When he picks Leta, he reveals that the contractual procedure is for the men to choose their bride without any interaction. Leta leaves with Alexander. Kay

continues to narrate that all the sisters were chosen until her. In her anger and humiliation at being last Claude steps forward. Although he is not unkind Kay is disappointed by his revelation that he is gay and has no intention of loving Kay, they are to live as roommates. He gives her small hope when he declares, "I'll take the brave one" (Brown).

Leta takes over the narration to *The Voice*, explaining the roles of the sisters and how they reacted to the next phase of their relationships with the men, the courting. Marcus attempts to impress Courtney with expensive gifts. Kem brings Philomena flowers, but she is allergic. He then tries to talk with her but seems to always say the wrong thing, making her angry. Dean asks Arianna about her cooking and cleaning abilities and if she is a virgin. Arianna responds with a panic attack. Claude and Kay seem to be having a great time playing never have I ever until Kay tries to kiss Claude. He rejects and dismisses her. Alexander is passed out on top of Leta and as she slides out Kem returns looking for Philomena. Kem and Leta begin a conversation that is genuine and vulnerable and by the end they are falling in love with each other. Leta then has an internal battle as her sisters are more and more distraught, Leta is happier and happier. She agrees to run away with Kem until Courtney confronts her and challenges her to think about the sisters. Leta ends her relationship with Kem in favor of solidarity with her sisters.

Arianna now takes over. She continues the retelling with the night before the wedding. She is the youngest and often gets nervous with panic attacks. Kay is smoking a joint alone until Arianna joins her. They have a vulnerable conversation where Arianna confesses her love for Kay. It is the connection that Kay has been longing for and Kay realizes that she loves Arianna back. Amid their kissing Dean and Courtney walk into the room and see them. Dean has brought a necklace as a gift for Arianna. When he gives it to her he threatens her with sexual dominance and punishment if she does not please him. Courtney calls for the sisters to gather. They debate until there is agreement that death is better than these forced marriages. The sisters agree to follow Courtney's plan. At the wedding the women run away in a boat the Courtney had used Marcus' gifts to pay for. The men, in response, throw their hands up in disbelief, have a drunken party and vow to chase the women down and bring them back.

Courtney continues the narration by declaring that she does not hate men or women but that something drastic needs to be done to open the eyes of those who are living in a broken society. Now it is time for the begging, but no one will help them. Letters in bottles begin to arrive. Promises from Claude, Alexander, and Marcus that they are coming to get them. Kem

writes a letter to. It is gentle and a warning. Courtney announces they are going back. The sisters are united and now willing to follow Courtney with no questioning, except Leta. Leta challenges the failure of Courtney's plan because of her genius. Leta reveals that she saw Courtney manipulate the situation so that Dean would catch Arianna and Kay giving them a need to escape. Leta figures out that Courtney's plan is to return and have each sister kill their husband, but it needs to be united. Leta refuses. Courtney tries to convince Leta through the logic of gender inequality, but Leta still resists. Courtney reveals that she knew about Kem and Leta and that Kem will be spared if Leta agrees. This causes Leta to agree. The sisters become a united front and then the men attack, capturing the women back.

Finally, Philomena tells her story, and the ending. She had known love, but she also knew pain, suffering, betrayal, and abuse. This caused her to be ready when Courtney changed her mind and told Philomena to kill Kem. The men prepare the women for the wedding and during this stripping down and dressing up Philomena sees how giving into her anger will keep her trapped, but forgiveness will free her. While the women kill the men, Philomena saves Kem.

"I understood that bad things come, and the darkness comes, and the hopelessness comes and then the light comes. And that we are not separate from each other, and compassion is the only answer. Because underneath the pain there is so much beauty." (Brown)

Dramaturgy

The Pliant Girls by Meghan Brown is a play written in 2014 as a feminist's loose, retelling of Aeschylus's *The Suppliants*. This source material is the only surviving play within a trilogy that tells the tragic story of Danaus' 50 daughters. This ancient play follows the Greek tradition of teaching law and reinforcing control through drama. It focuses on marriage laws specifically that of next-of-kin marriages that serve to keep property within the family. In *The Suppliants* there is also an undercurrent of racism as the Danaides and their cousins are Egyptian, not Greek thus bringing up questions of immigration and white savior complex. *The Pliant Girls* is considered a loose adaptation as Brown chooses to overlook the racial undertones of *The Suppliants* and instead focus on the issues of sexual politics, love, and freedom.

Brown clearly creates two opposing sides, thoughts, or maybe worlds within this play. The first being that of the patriarchy, defined as "a form of social organization in which the father is the supreme authority in the family, clan, or tribe and descent is reckoned in the male line, with the children belonging to the father's clan or tribe." (dictionary.com) The men in *The Pliant Girls* are in various states of agreement and compliance with this organization. The second world is that of the sisters. This world is at first glance, less defined. The women are so different, and it is immediately evident that they are not blood related causing the audience to question how they are sisters. This helps the audience to know and see that the use of sister is not about the genetic connection but alludes to some of the other definitions of sister: a female friend or protector, a woman who supports, promotes, or participates in feminism, or having a close relationship with another because of shared interests, problems, or the like. (dictionary.com) According to these definitions the sisters become more universal and representative of all women.

The clear dichotomy between these two worlds leads to significant questions and concerns particularly regarding costume. If feminism is "the belief in and advocacy of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes expressed especially through organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests" (merriam-webster.com) then how are these two contradicting worlds expressed. This leads to the concepts known as The Male and Female Gaze. The essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* by Laura Mulvey and published in 1975, discusses how an audience views a film. This complex and evolving film theory is based in a world of sexual imbalance where pleasure is found in looking. "The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional

exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness..." (Mulvey) This is the world that Father and the men live in. This is the world that threatens to overtake the sisters. In contrast, The Female Gaze flips this way of looking upside down. This does not mean that it takes the male figure and imparts a female fantasy on him to be looked at with pleasure. Nor does it mean that a female actor is placed in the role of a male protagonist. Instead, the female gaze is a way of "feeling seeing" According to Jill Soloway, "it could be thought of as a subjective camera that attempts to get inside the protagonist...It uses the frame to share and evoke a feeling of being in feeling, rather than seeing – the characters." These two ways of thinking are the foundations of the men's and women's worlds in *The Pliant Girls*.

Even with Brown's attempt at avoiding racial based issues it is unavoidable. Father refers to Kay's hair as "weird." In a show that is about gender inequality, male vs female gaze, and therefore implicitly questions standards of beauty this line now becomes charged. Add to it the casting of a white man as Father and a black woman as Kay and the line becomes racially charged. In a country where the discrimination of natural and protective black hairstyles has been used to control and oppress people of color another layer of inequality was brought out. This racial layer was also demonstrated in the casting of black and brown actors cast as oppressive and cruel members of the patriarchy who meet a violent end on stage.

Character Analysis

Courtney is the first of the women to step out of the group indicating that she is the leader. Her father calls her, “the smart one” and allows her to try and find a way out of the marriage contract. When she is unable to find a legal way out her plan adapts as Marcus chooses her first, calling her “the mean one.” Courtney is at her best loyal and strong. She considers the need of her sisters to be free and resolves to rescue them. This rescue comes however at the cunning and even manipulation of their situation. Demonstrating that Courtney is as smart and as mean as they say even while she is motivated by a strong sense of protection and justice.

Leta is the second in command. She suffers from being average, the middle of the pack. While she is funny it quickly becomes apparent that her humor stems from her need to be distinct and different from her sisters. When the opportunity for love presents itself, Leta embraces it with joy and hope and a little bit of recklessness. In an act of self-sacrifice Leta chooses to stand with her sisters in unity and solidarity, demonstrating her sense of justice and kindness to her sisters.

Philomena is not what she seems at first. While she is chosen for marriage second because she is “the pretty one” those looks are a façade and a protective, coping mechanism for her pain. Much like the acrylic macaroons that Philomena makes her outer shell that conforms to the men’s world idea of beauty is hard, keeping out others and protecting her secrets. Her broken heart has led to hidden, bitter, anger. It is the memory of this love lost that reminds her of what can be and leads her to forgiveness and hope and ultimately allows her to rescue Kem and give back love to her sister Leta.

Arianna is the youngest sister, and it is her becoming “marrying age” that sets the marriage contract in motion. The “little bird” has anxiety and panic attacks that happened even before she is chosen by the predatory Dean. While Arianna can be melodramatic, she learns how to be calm and strong when she embraces who she is and what she believes in. When she confesses her love for Kay, Arianna learns to be courageous and understands what is important to her. She is then able to advocate for herself and for Kay, taking a stand against the unjust, forced marriage.

Kay is the last sister to be chosen reinforcing her feelings of being the leftover, black sheep of the family. While Claude momentarily encourages her by calling her “the brave one” her suspicions of being unlovable are confirmed when he continues to reject her because she is

a woman. Kay is expressive of her emotions in ways that are unacceptable to her father and his world. She is desperate to feel loved, accepted, and connected and since she cannot achieve this she responds with self-medicating, careless sexual interactions, disordered eating, and counter-cultural fashions. Her hurt and shame are answered in the love and acceptance from Arianna. When Kay sees that she has always been accepted and she only needed to embrace that love she is able to turn her gaze outward and help her sisters in their mutual fight for freedom.

Marcus is a rich, arrogant, hedge-fund baby. He believes in the ethic of work-hard and then play-hard. He chooses Courtney in the hopes that they would be the envied, power couple. He does not question the world and system they live in and cannot understand why anyone would. His pride is wounded by Courtney's betrayal, and he responds in anger and rage.

Kem is insecure and unsure at first. He is seeking connection and optimistic about finding joy and happiness within the system that he recognizes is messed up. While he falls into the trap of first impressions, he is sympathetic to the limitations of the situation and willing to learn and change.

Dean is the worst. He is a predator who embraces the way his world works and uses it to his advantage and for his personal gratification. He is dark, misogynistic, and controlling and sees women as nothing more than objects to be used and abused.

Alexander is disconnected. He is sloppy, drunk, flippant, and bizarre. He hides his lack of confidence and his insecurity behind humor and substance abuse. Even when he sobers up, he is thoughtless, expecting Leta to mother him and help him clean up his life.

Claude is not unkind but still deeply lacking. He looks good and seems to be self-aware in his sexuality and his understanding of how he fits into this world. Claude uses this world and this marriage contract to hide and indulge in what he wants and how he wants to live. He is unable to see Kay's struggle and cries for help and does the minimum required to help the sisters as their problems do not affect him significantly.

The Father is a poor, single, parent. He allows the many problems of his daughters to crush him. He retreats into the "old fashioned" way of dealing with the women in his life by being unemotional and justifying his actions as a well-meaning attempt at providing for their physical needs.

CHAPTER 3
DESIGN PROCESS
Design Choices

Through the costume designs of *The Pliant Girls*, I wanted to explore and challenge the ideas of beauty. Merriam-Webster defines beauty as “the quality of being physically attractive” but who is to say what is physically attractive? According to the Male Gaze this would be the fantasy of heterosexual men. This is not the image I wanted to support. I wanted to disrupt, “break apart, throw into disorder, rupture, cause upheaval, and interrupt the normal course of unity of” beauty. (merriam-webster.com) Within that disruption I sought to bring in the audience to the internal world of the characters. To demonstrate the effects of the world and circumstances on the internal person through their outward costume. Like Soloway, I wanted the audience to know, “I’m not just showing you this thing, I want you to really feel with me.” To feel the constraint, pain, vulnerability, and brutality that the women feel. To feel with me the honor of the female and her body without objectifying it. Likewise, to be drawn in as the men slowly lose control of the situation, of their understanding, I wanted the audience to feel disoriented and exposed.

Practically this developed into two opposing looks and progressions. For the women, they began in a dismantled look. Each female character has an individual look that reflects their person and journey but shares details with each other to tie them together as a group. Showing their connection as “sisters”. The details that they share are skin-tone base undergarments, a form of binding, a knit item that is distressed and a limited palate of warm neutral colors of cream, light browns, oatmeal’s and bringing in some yellow, green, and orange but avoiding black and blue while leaving red for the murder reveal at the end. The undergarments did not have underwire or boning to limit their structural support. The purpose of this was to provide coverage and protection for the vulnerability of their exposed bodies but to also to allow for the natural shape to be what seen. Emphasizing that the beauty of these characters came from themselves and not manipulated into an unnatural standard. The binding represented the constraints of their oppressive situation. Finally, the distressed knit item points to their need for comfort but it is inadequate.

As individuals these pieces also demonstrated their personalities. Courtney has leather straps that hold her tunic and leather, huntress, armbands on. These hinted to the ancient Spartan women who were confident and strong leaders and supports Courtney as the fierce

commander of their fight. These themes continue through her strappy sports bra, short leg briefs and in the practicality of her wearing pants. For Leta the layered ruffle pants mirror the utility of Courtney's as her second in command but the unusual style draws attention to her goofiness and the low-cut hips call into question the idea that exposed skin automatically equals men's fantasy. Leta's distressed crop sweater mimics the style of Greek chitons being held by pins on the shoulders and through the sleeves while also serving as the binding detail.

Philomena is the most masked character. She is the closest to conforming to the Male Gaze definition of beauty. Her billowing lightweight sleeves hint at soft feminine lines but also strangle her at her neck and wrap around her body, confining and restraining her. Her knit mermaid skirt with multiple vertical panels nods to ionic columns and while the slit is high, leading the viewer to believe they can look at her intimately her legs are covered with thick knit socks that cover her to her thigh. She is a visual battle of protection, control, and exposure.

Arianna is the youngest and so her baby-doll top pieced together with muslin and crocheted flowers hint at her youth. Her lightweight pants pull and gather in layers keeping her bound in this cruel world. Her fuzzy cream sweater adds a softness and innocence to her look while the long sleeve and high neck indicate that she has a secret to hide. Kay wears an asymmetrical sweater that is pieced together from multiple yarns and sweaters reflecting her journey of being torn apart and having to put herself back together after each rejection. The parachute skirt shows that the parachute is useless to her to escape, and her tights tightly bind her to the island that even when she escapes from, she willingly returns. Her tattoos that cover her body and hide her skin reveal secrets like the love for her hummingbird and her longing for beauty (large floral tattoo). These costumes create a unified looking linking each sister together while allowing for their individuality.

When the men capture the women they are forced to strip down to their undergarments and muzzled. These muzzles are painted to match the concrete walls of the set silencing their voices when they are most vulnerable. They are then presented with red stilettos, red lipstick, and their white wedding dresses. The red stiletto shoes are the first red seen on stage and foreshadow the murders about to happen as the shoes become the murder weapons. The wedding dresses are long sleeve, high neck, full length with crinoline and boning. They are all identical to each other. When put on it covers each sister eliminating their individuality and manipulating their bodies into a perceived ideal. It is the embodiment of the control the men's world is thrusting upon them.

In contrast the men begin in more uniformity of shape, structure and color. We first see them in tuxedos staying with the traditional black and white and only bringing in accents of cool blues and silvers in contrast to the warm colors of the women.²¹ Their individuality is limited. Marcus is in a modern cut with a satin tie and diamond jewelry, showing off his wealth. Kem is in a tuxedo with pleated pants, a cummerbund, and loose fitting jacket. He is softer and a little awkward. Dean has a tuxedo jacket with sharp, peaked collar and pointed snake skin shoes. Alexander wears a velvet jacket with shawl collar because he is soft, without a backbone. Finally Claude is in a double breasted jacket that warps tightly around him helping to hide his secrets. They begin looking like a fantasy, reinforcing the idea that they are to be desired. As the women resist them and their understanding of their world and system and control over the women is lost. They begin to lose pieces of their tuxedo one at a time. The visual fantasy begins to fade and we as an audience are drawn into their feelings of confusion, anger, and desperation. When the men reach the final wedding they are in various stages of undress. Kem, who has learned to love and listen with Leta is fully clothed, with shoes at the same stage we saw him when he parted ways with Leta in the forest. Marcus is barefoot in tuxedo pants and a button down shirt that has been quick rigged to be ripped open once the murder begins. Alexander is barefoot in tuxedo pants and a crew neck undershirt. Claude is in a v-neck undershirt and tuxedo pants that are quick rigged to be torn off during the murder, exposing blue boxer shorts. Finally Dean, who has been the most cruel is violently brought on stage in an open tuxedo shirt, ashirt, and blue bikini brief underwear. As he is pushed and pulled to center stage his tuxedo shirt is torn off and ashirt is ripped from his body leaving him exposed in when he is finally murdered. This leaves the four murdered men at their most exposed and juxtaposed with the women who now have taken their power.

Emotional Research

Initial Response

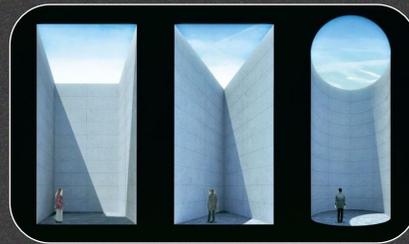
The Pliant Girls

By Meghan Brown
Costume Design by Helen Dominguez



Emotional Response

Brutalism, Female Gaze, Ancient Greece in the Future, Santorini, Hope, Escape,





World Of...

Women in a man's world



World of...



Women with women



World of...

The capture





The Fantasy
Freedom and Variety

A collage of three images: George Clooney in a tuxedo, Chiwetel Ejiofor on a red carpet, and a group of men in various tuxedo styles.

Contrast

Character vs Category
 Variety vs Uniformity
 Color vs Void



World of Color Palettes



Men's World

Women's World



Dismantling Pretty

Dismantling Pretty

Binding
Skin tone base
Comfort but distressed
Sheer
Gathered
Tights
Unconventional



Character Research

Courtney



Courtney

The smart one
Marcus calls her the mean one
Leader
Loyal
Resolved
Smart
Angry



Courtney

The smart one
Marcus calls her the mean one
Leader
Loyal
Resolved
Angry

Leta



Leta

The funny one
The second in command
Middle of the pack
Reckless
Hopeful



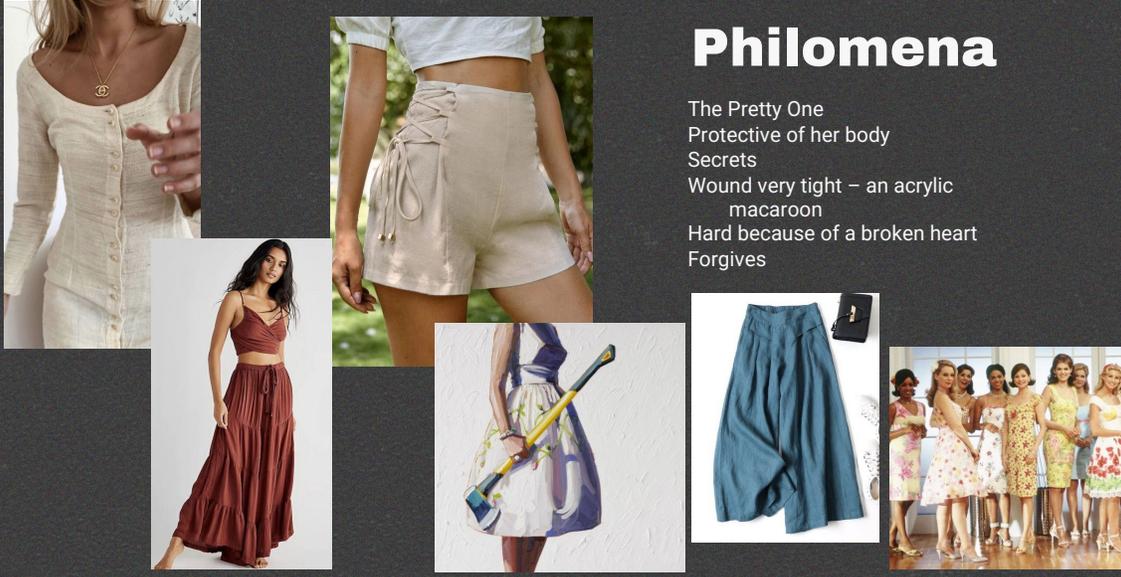
Leta

The funny one
The second in command
Middle of the pack
Reckless
Hopeful

Philomena

Philomena

The Pretty One
Protective of her body
Secrets
Wound very tight – an acrylic macaroon
Hard because of a broken heart
Forgives

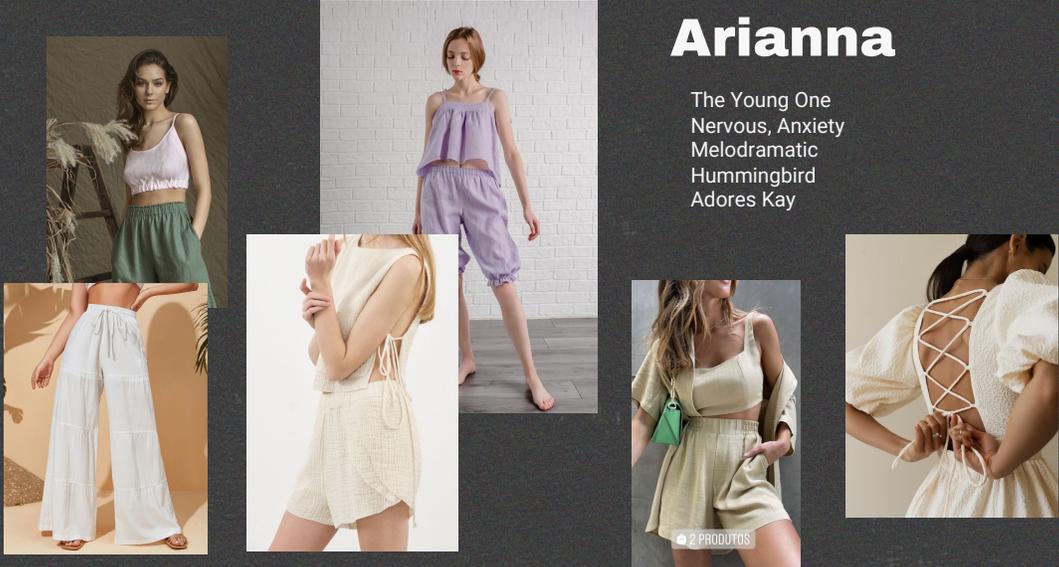


Philomena

The Pretty One
Protective of her body
Secrets
Wound very tight
– an acrylic macaroon
Hard because of a broken heart
Forgives



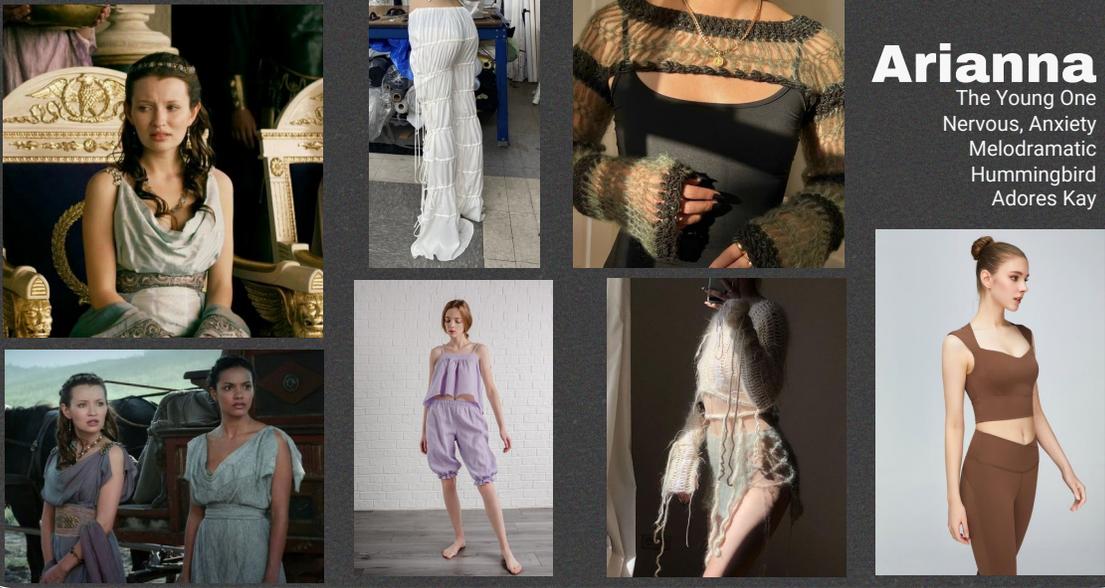
Arianna



Arianna

The Young One
Nervous, Anxiety
Melodramatic
Hummingbird
Adores Kay

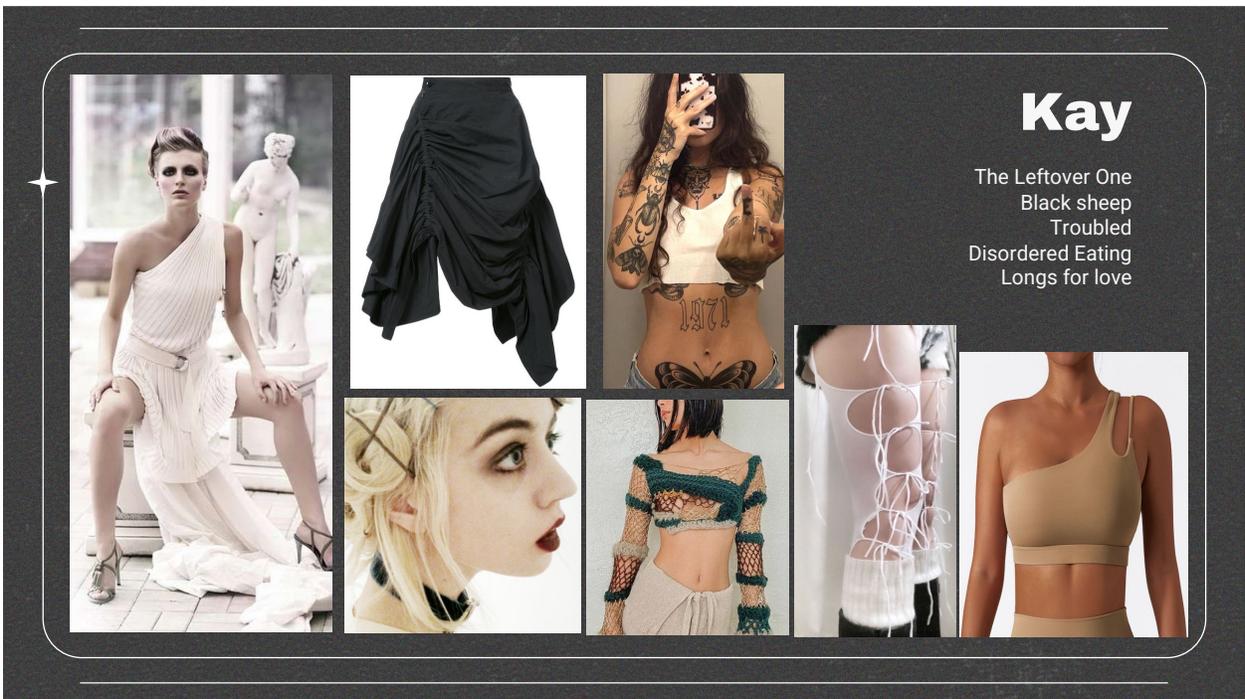
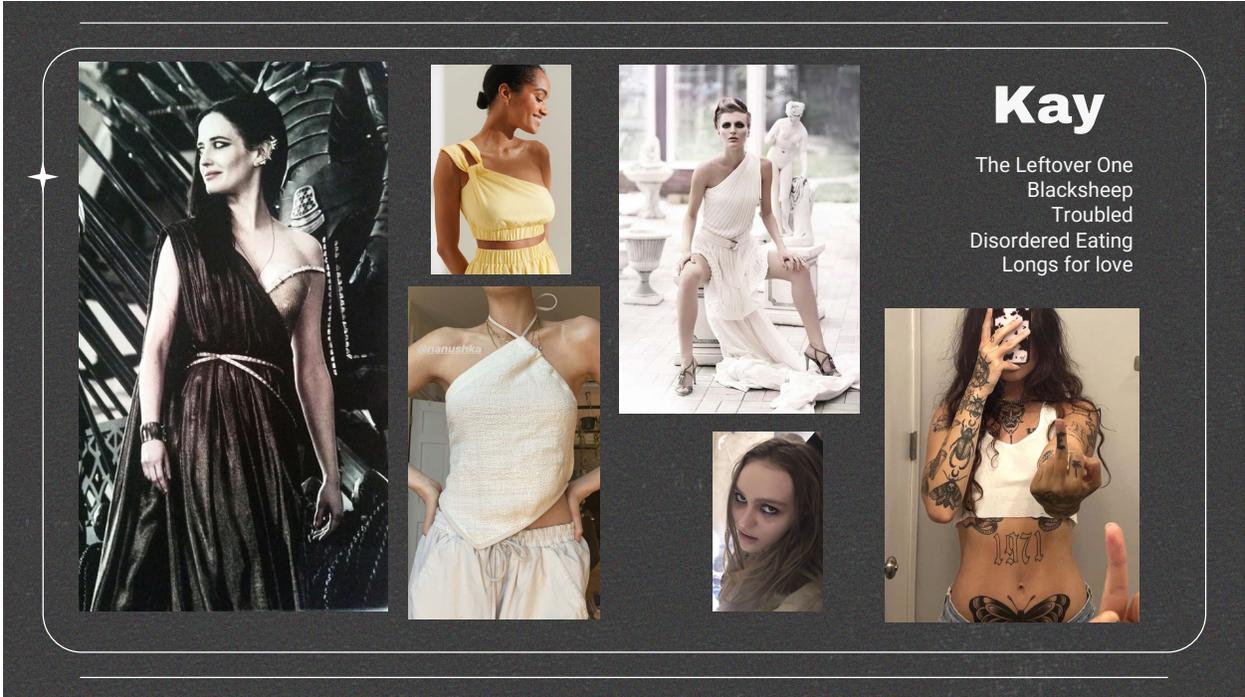
2 PRODUTOS



Arianna

The Young One
Nervous, Anxiety
Melodramatic
Hummingbird
Adores Kay

Kay



Masks



Muzzle



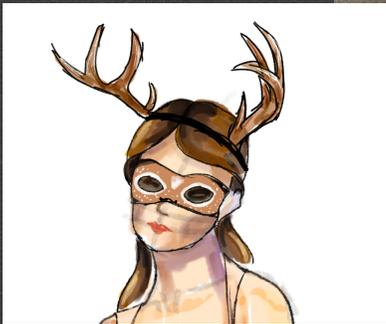
Deer

Deer



Deer

Antler Headband
Painted mask



Marcus

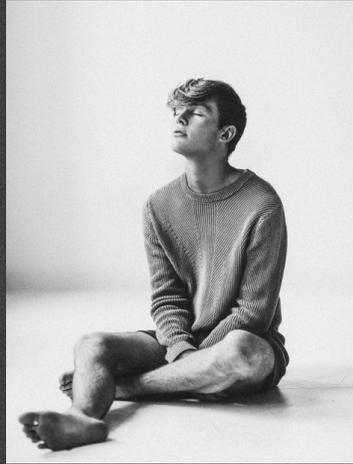
Rich, arrogant
Work Hard/Play Hard



Marcus

Down to a-shirt at murder

Kem



Kem

Seeking connection
Sympathetic
Optimistic
Trying



Kem

Most dressed at murder

Dean



Dean

The Worst
Darkness
Misogynistic
Sexual



Dean

Most vulnerable at murder



Alexander



Alexander
Drunk, sloppy
Bizarre
Not Serious
Hopeless



Alexander
Sloppy, no undershirt
still deconstructed

Claude

★



Claude
Not Unkind
Has a boyfriend
Likes to cook
Self aware

★



Claude
Not unkind, mostly clothes

Father

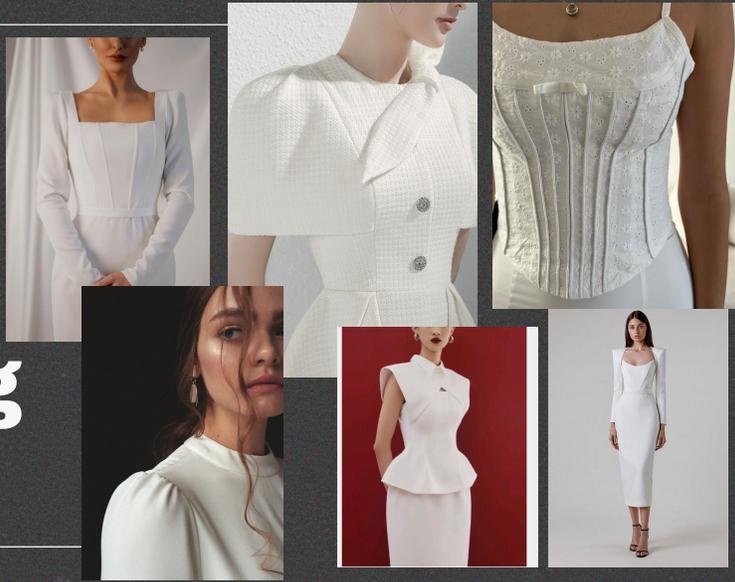


Father

Well-meaning, out of touch
Poor
Overwhelmed
Patriarchal

Wedding Dresses

**Wedding
Dress**



**Wedding
Dress**



Sketches

Initial "Dismantled" Ideas





Initial Wedding Dress Ideas



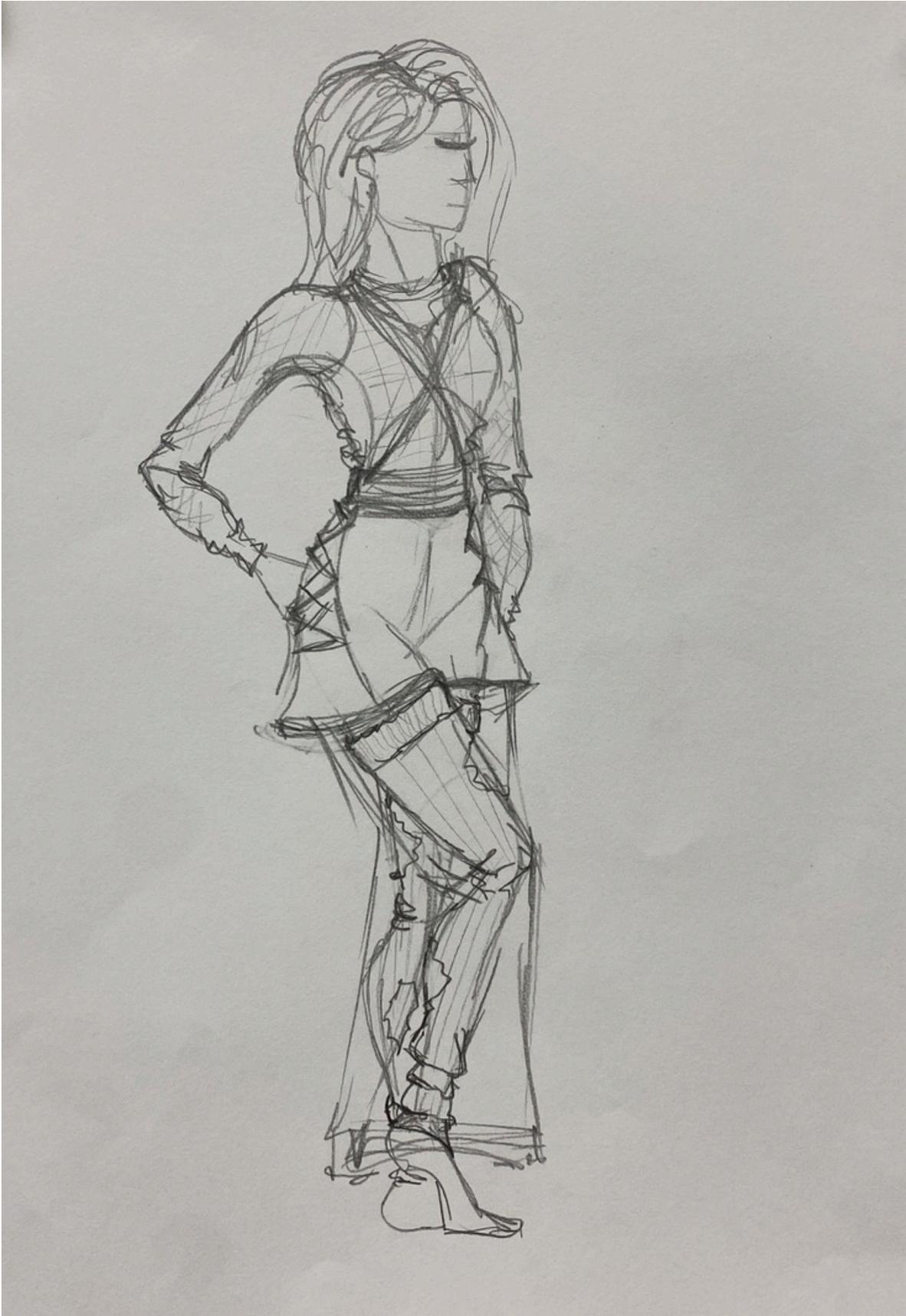
Midpoint Courtney



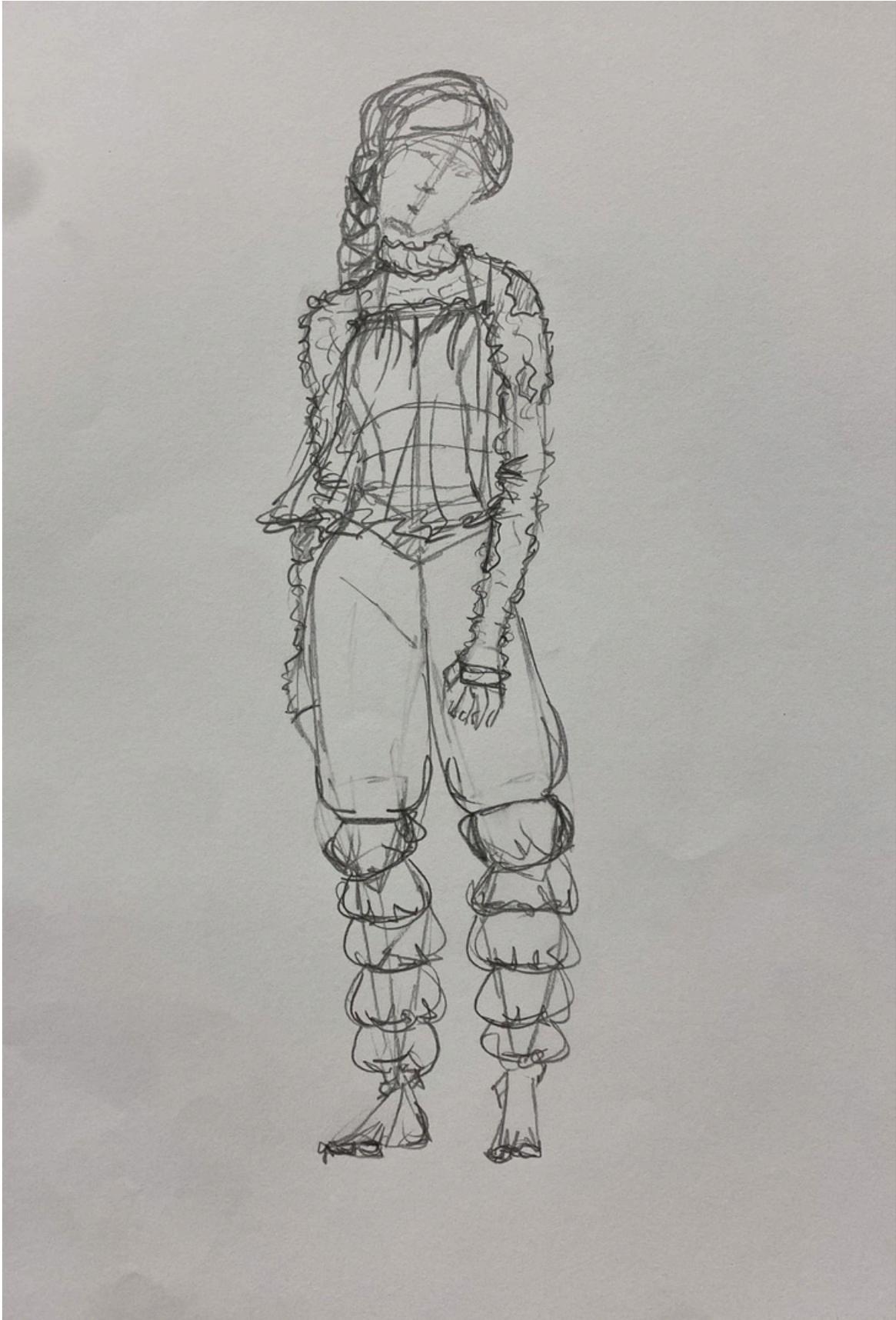
Midpoint Leta



Midpoint Philomena



Midpoint Arianna



Midpoint Kay



Midpoint Wedding Dresses



Final Working Session

Courtney



Leta



Philomena



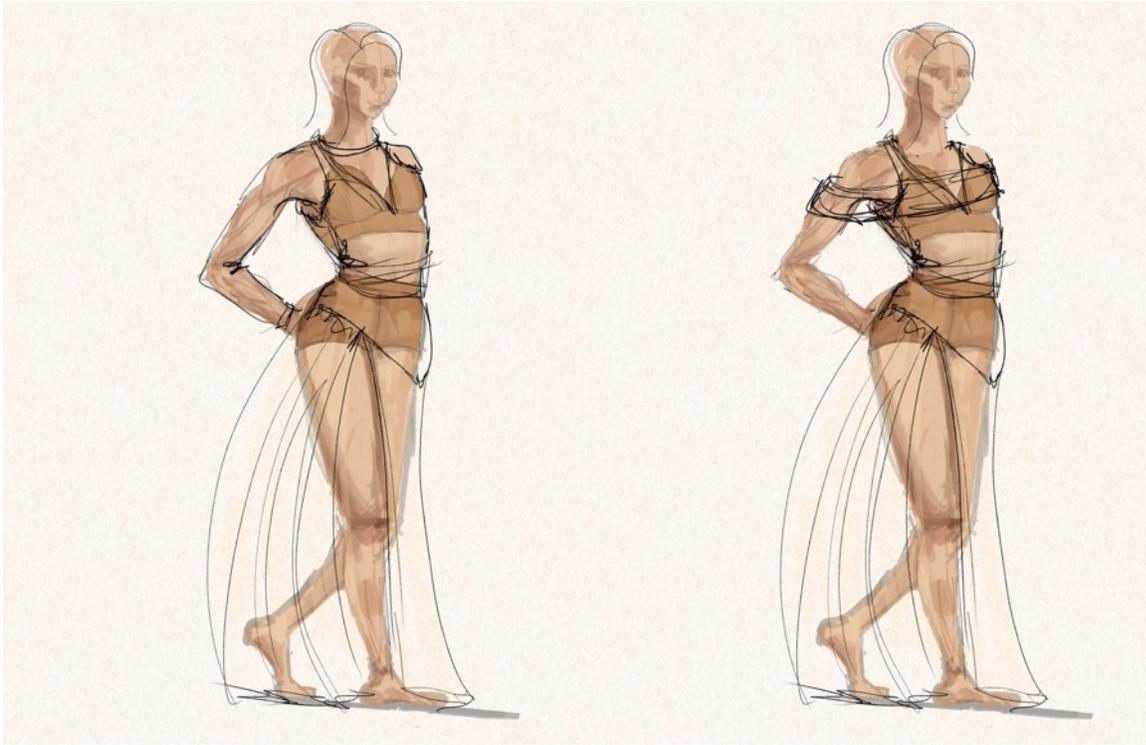
Arianna



Kay



Philomena Re-design





Men's Deconstruction Storyboard



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The Letters









Final Renderings







DISMANTLING PRETTY
Courtney, The Smart One
THE PLANT GIRLS

Helen
Dominguez



CAPTURE
Courtney, The Smart One
THE PLANT GIRLS

Helen
Dominguez



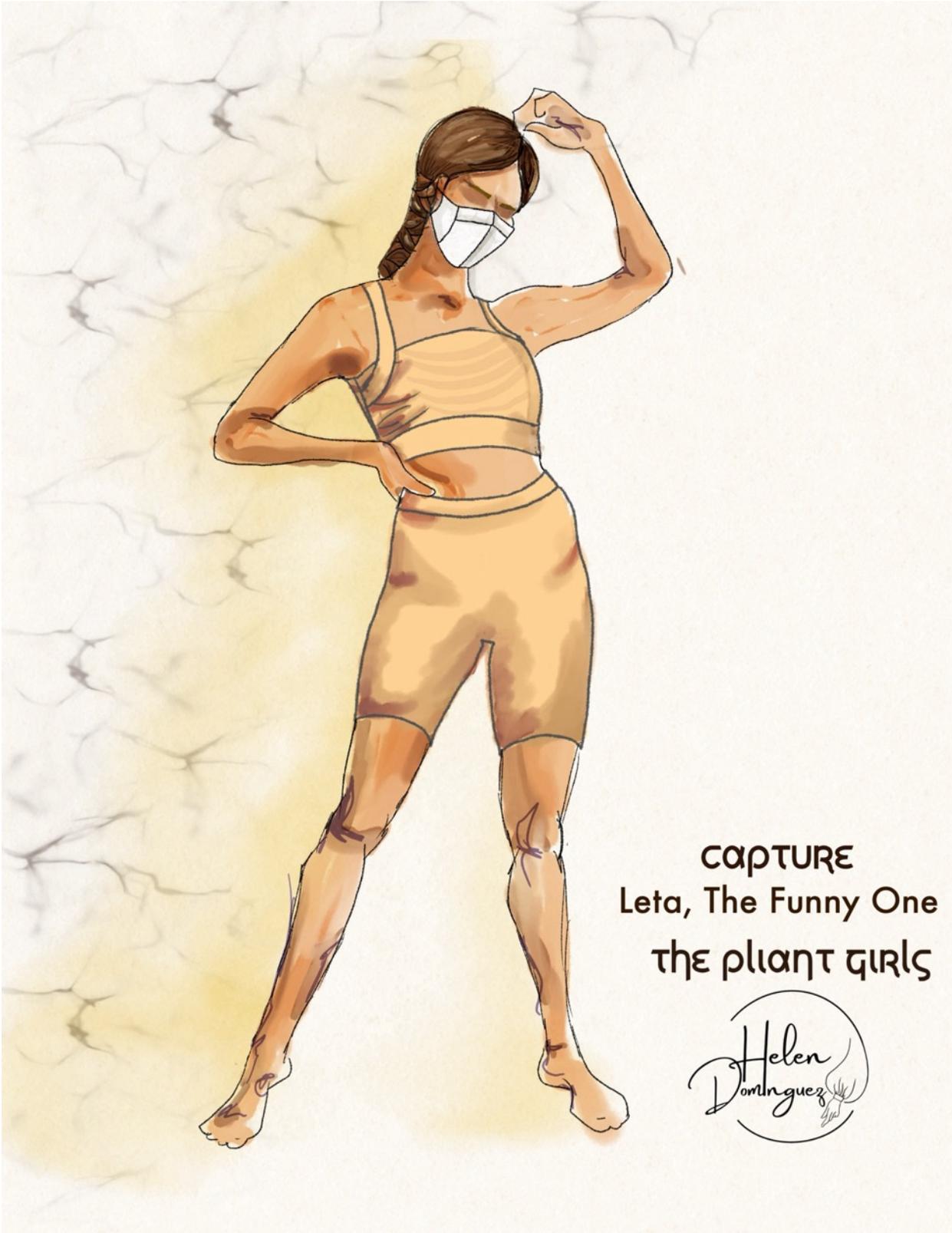
THE WEDDING
Courtney, The Smart One
THE PLANT GIRLS

Helen
Dominguez



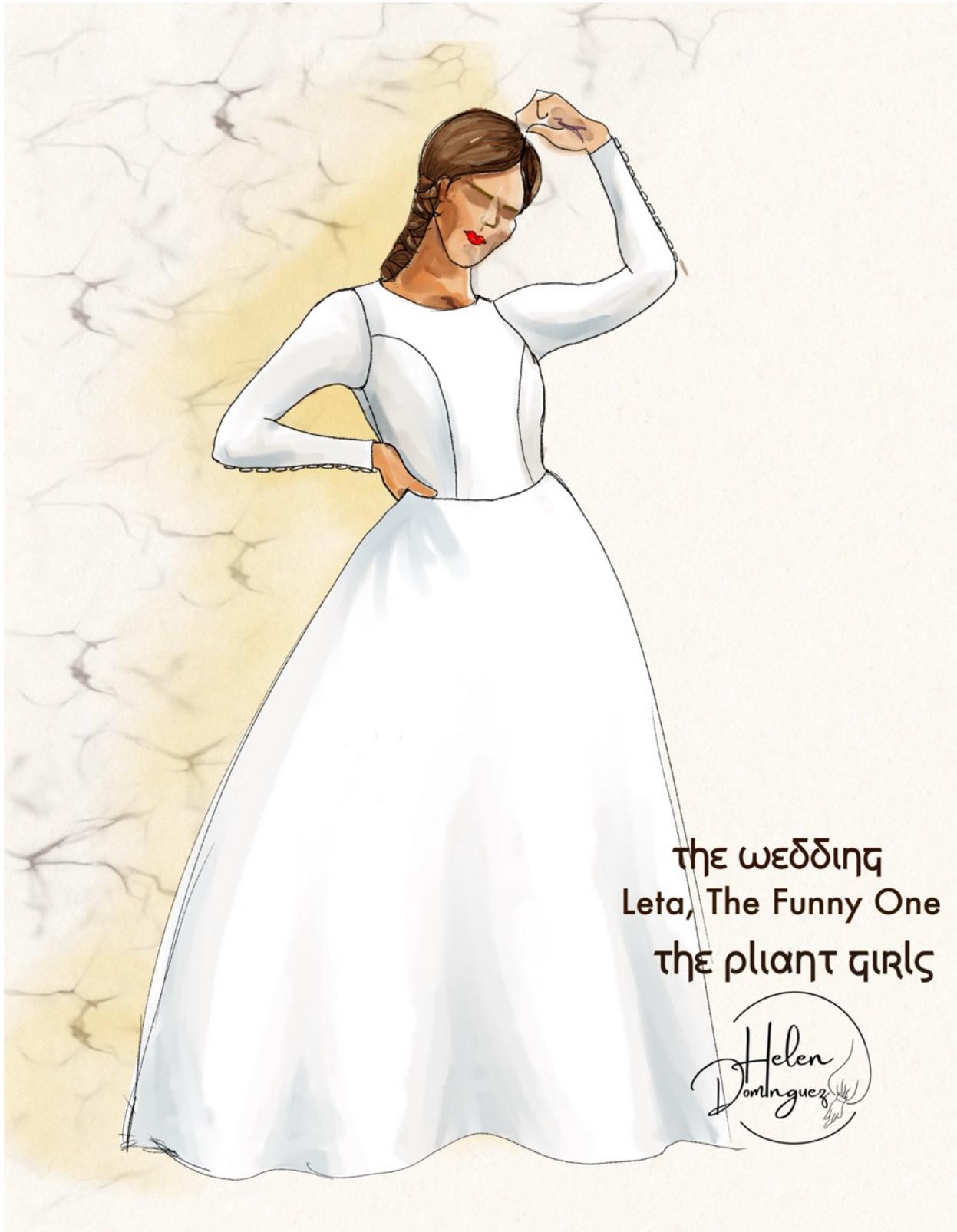
DISMANTLING PRETTY
Leta, The Funny One
THE PLANT GIRLS

Helen
Dominguez



CAPTURE
Leta, The Funny One
THE PLANT GIRLS

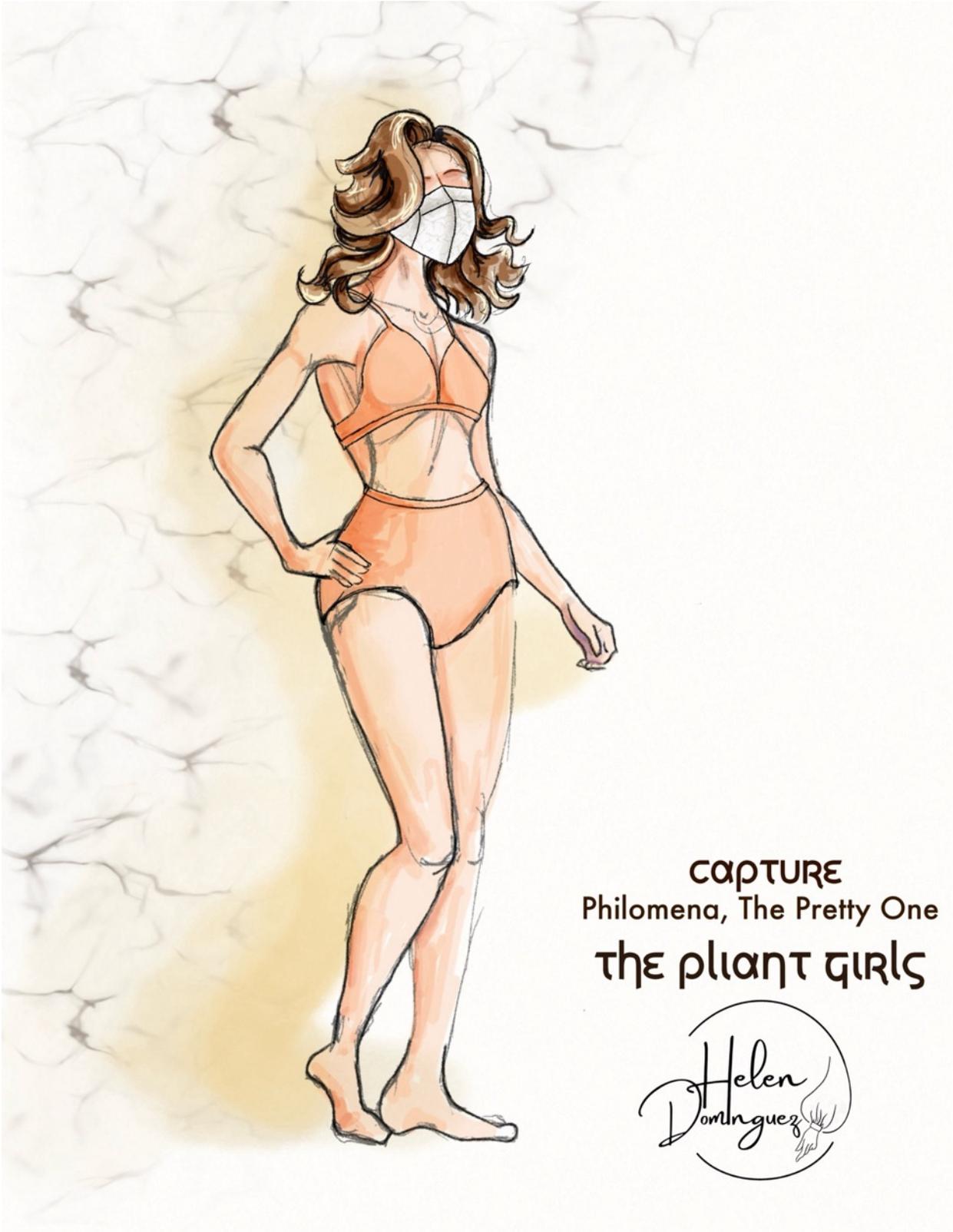
Helen
Dominguez





DISMANTLING PRETTY
Philomena, The Pretty One
THE PLANT GIRLS

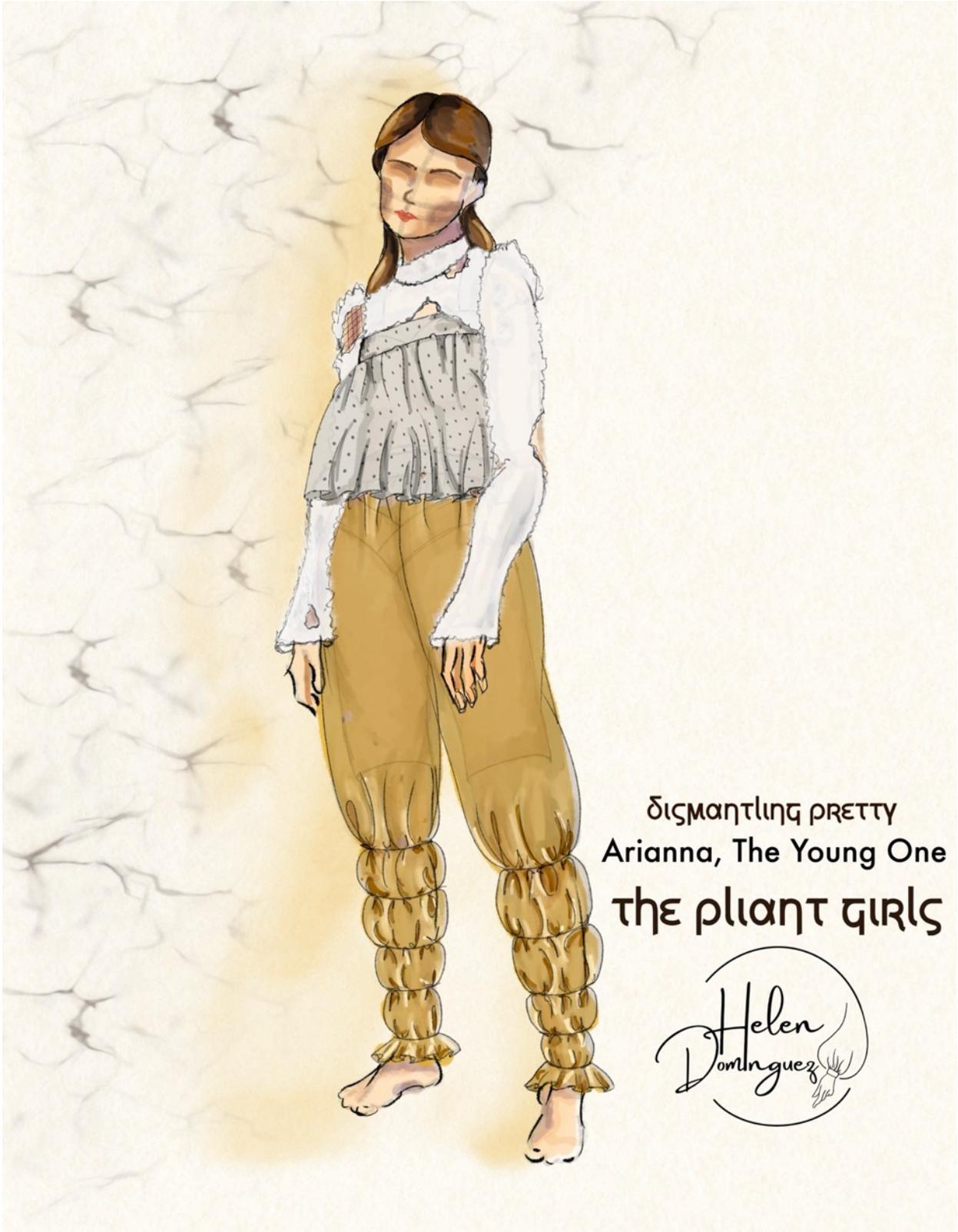
Helen
Dominguez



CAPTURE
Philomena, The Pretty One
THE PLANT GIRLS

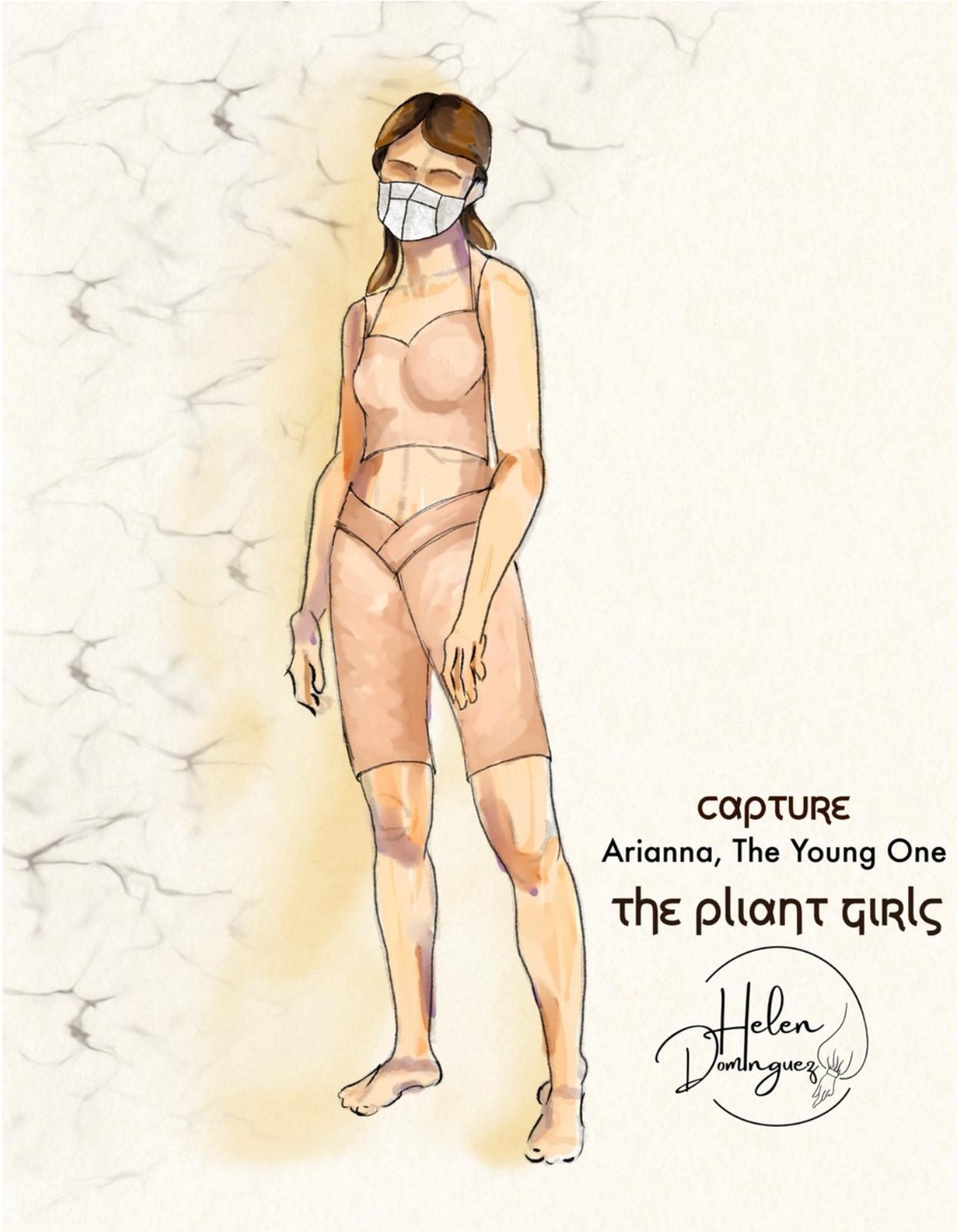
*Helen
Dominguez*





DISMANTLING PRETTY
Arianna, The Young One
THE PLANT GIRLS

Helen
Dominguez



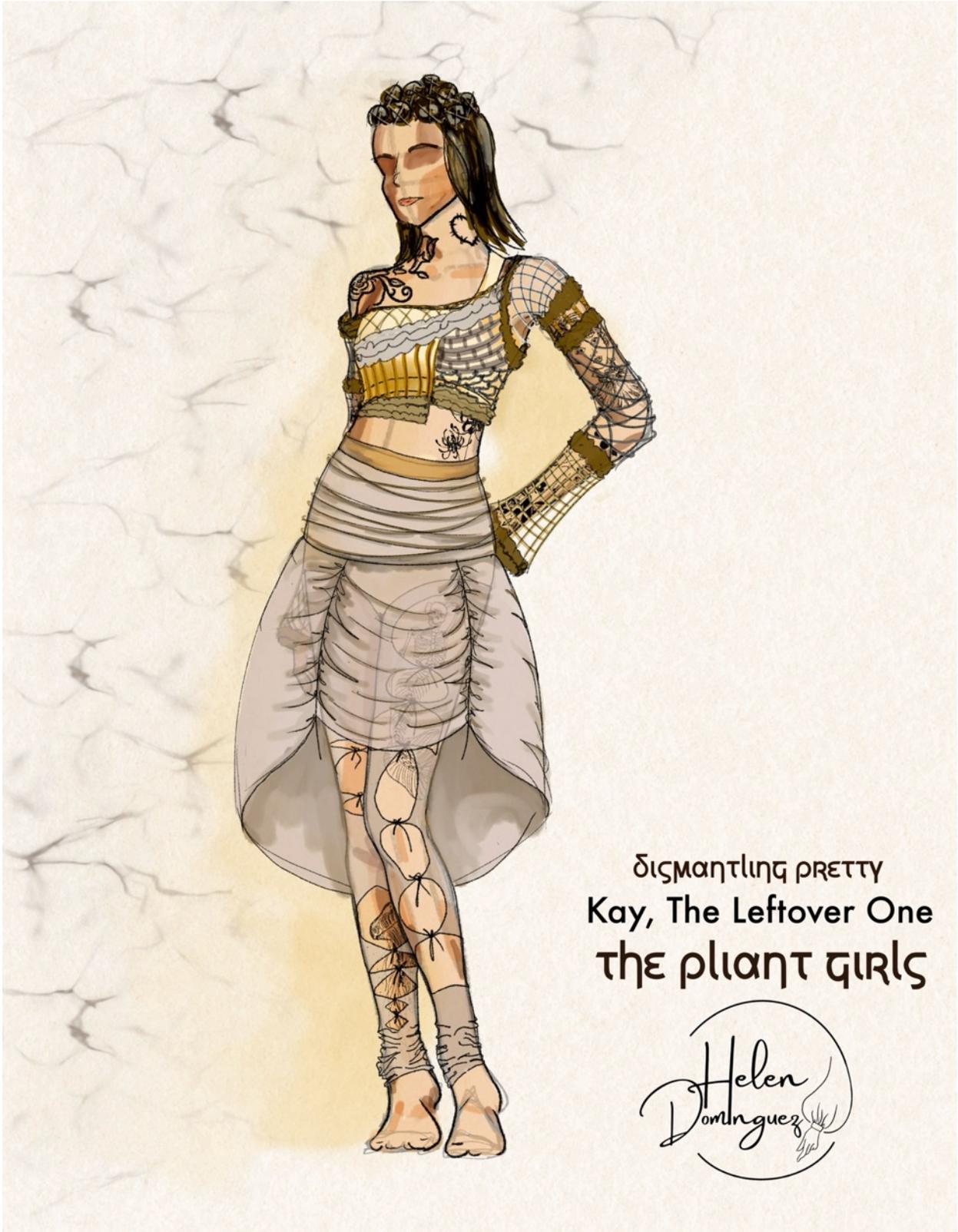
CAPTURE
Arianna, The Young One
THE PLANT GIRLS

*Helen
Dominguez*



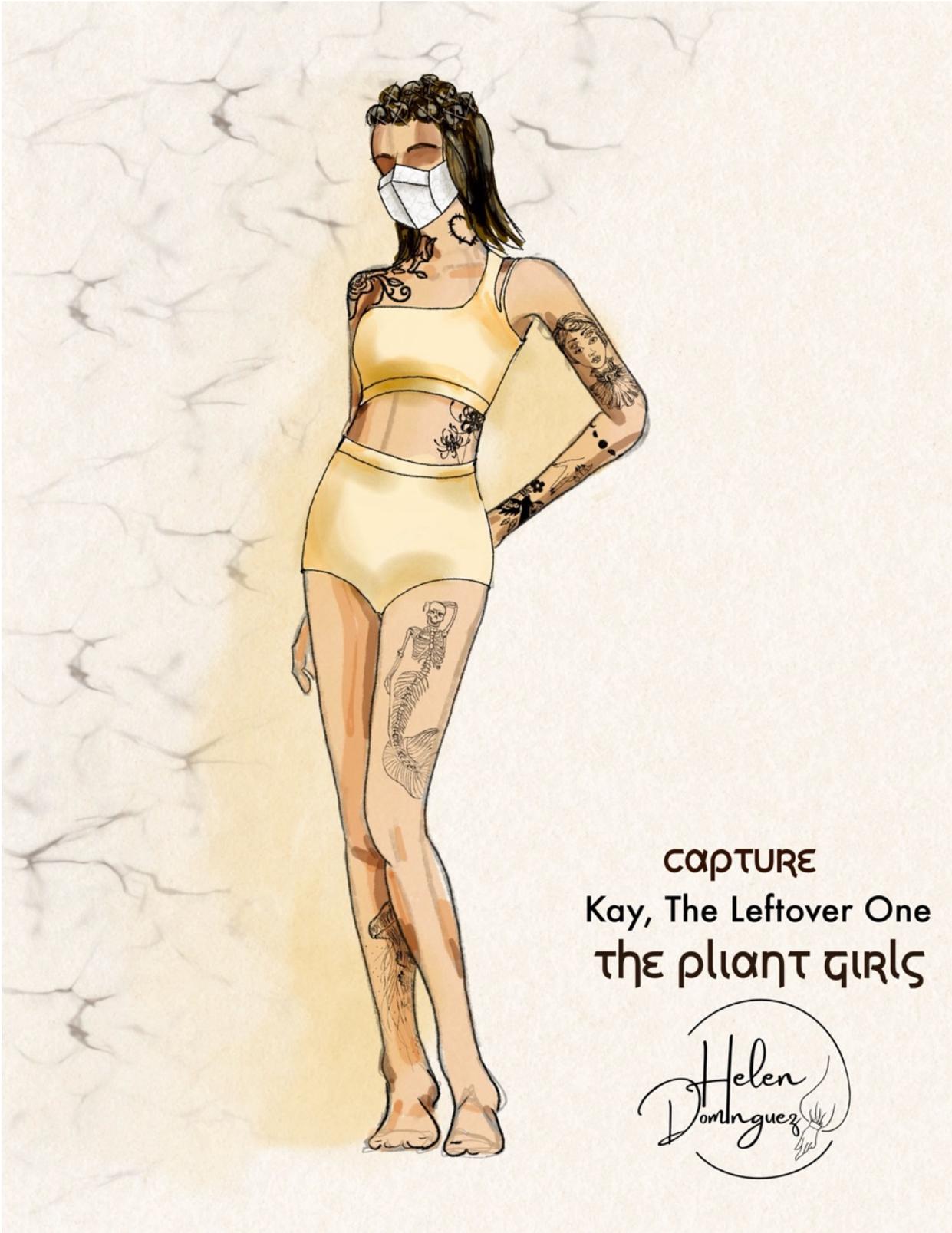
THE WEDDING
Arianna, The Young One
THE PLIANT GIRLS

Helen
Dominguez



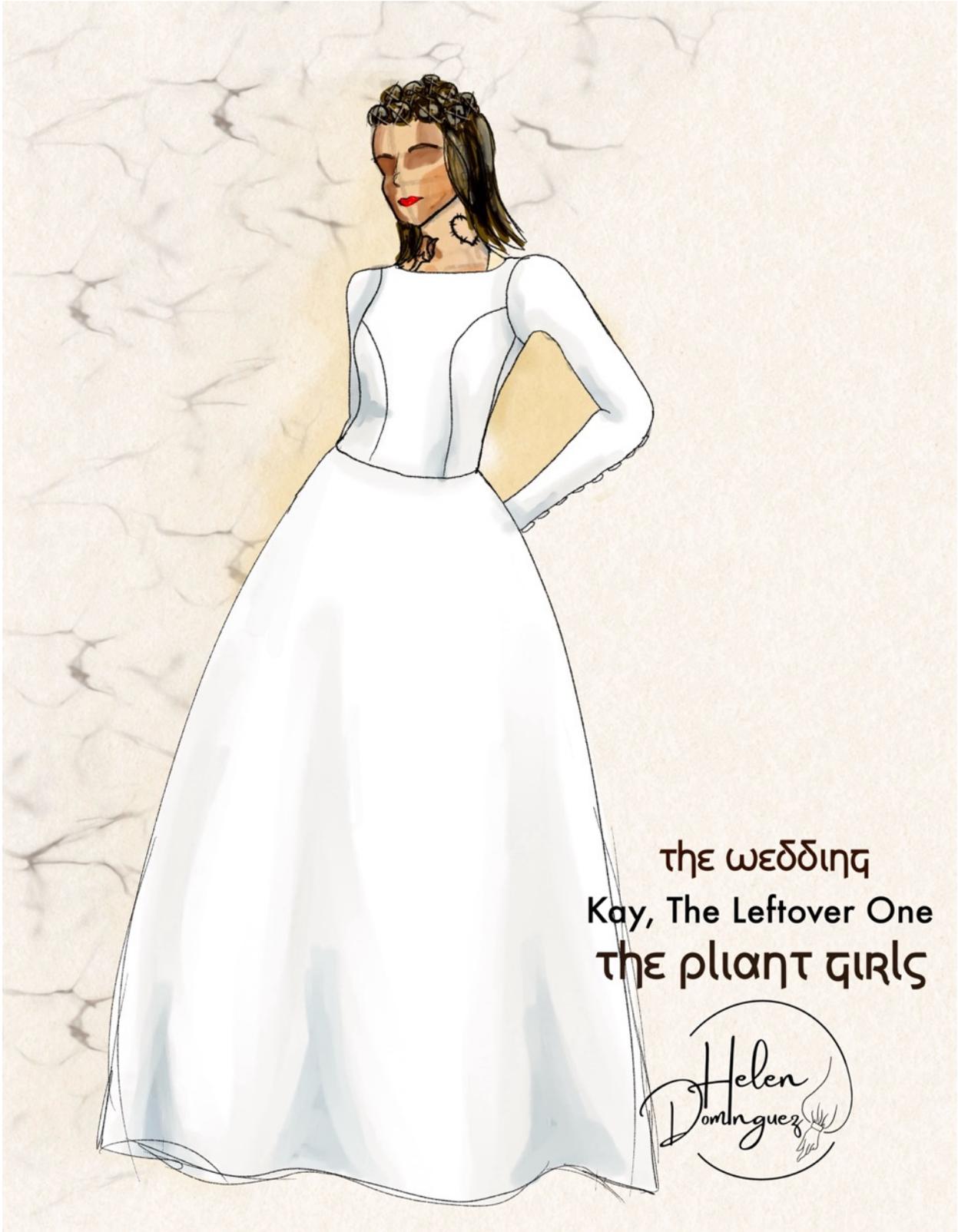
ΔΙΣΜΑΝΤΙΝΗ PRETTY
Kay, The Leftover One
THE PLANT GIRL

Helen
Dominguez



CAPTURE
Kay, The Leftover One
THE PLANT GIRLS

Helen
Dominguez





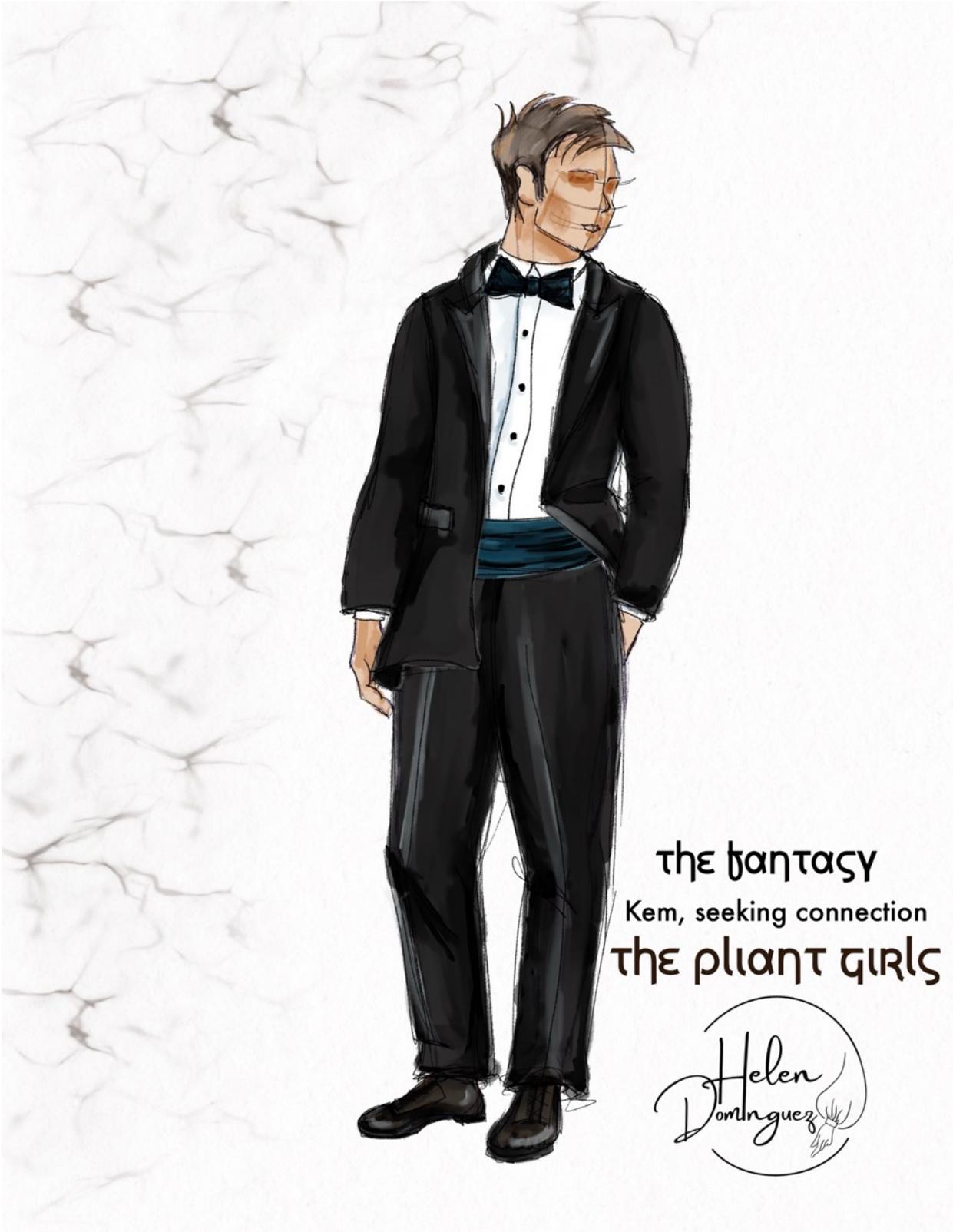
THE FANTASY
Marcus, rich and arrogant
THE PLANT GIRLS





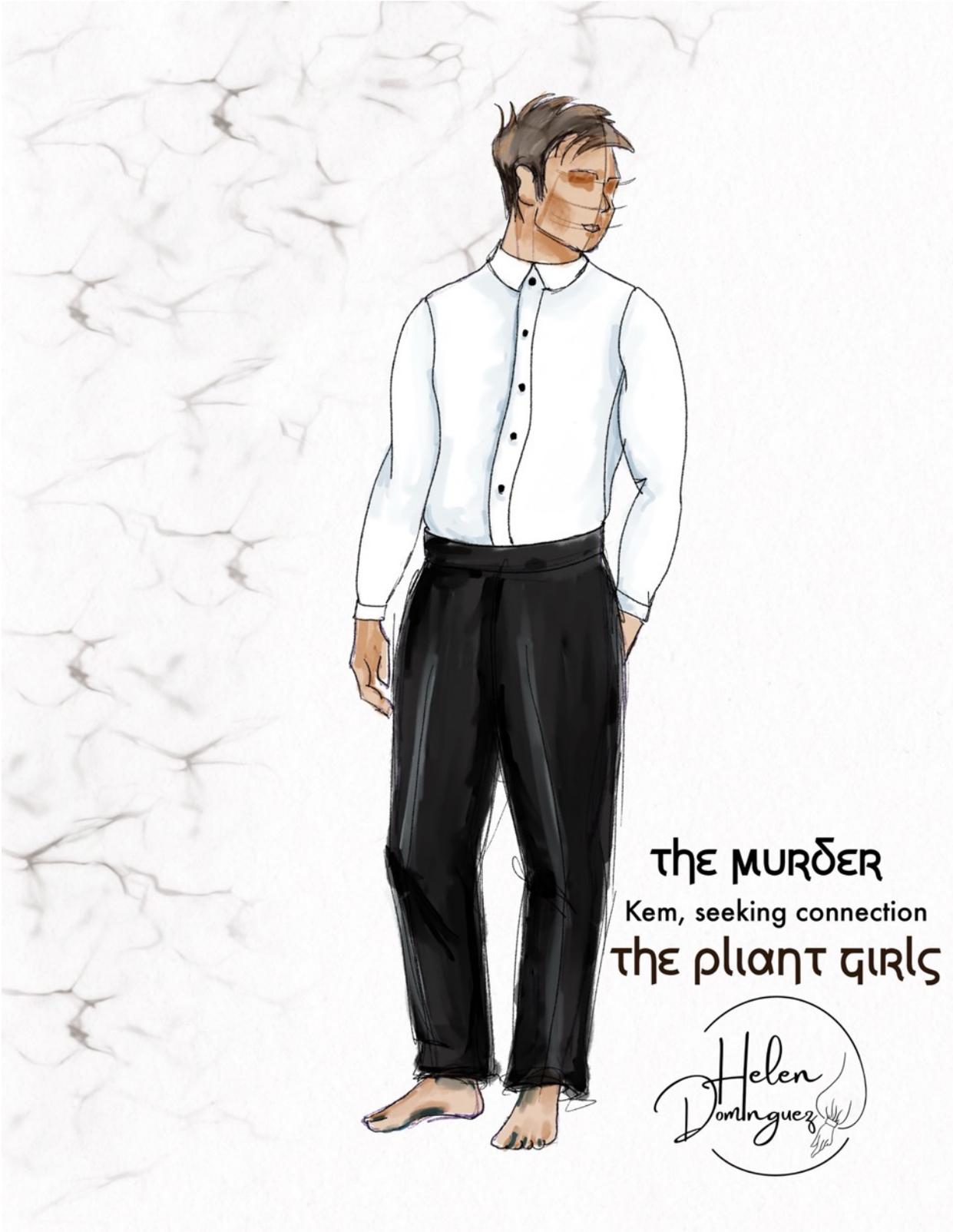
THE MURDER
Marcus, rich and arrogant
THE PLANT GIRLS

Helen
Dominguez



the fantasy
Kem, seeking connection
the plant girls

Helen
Dominguez



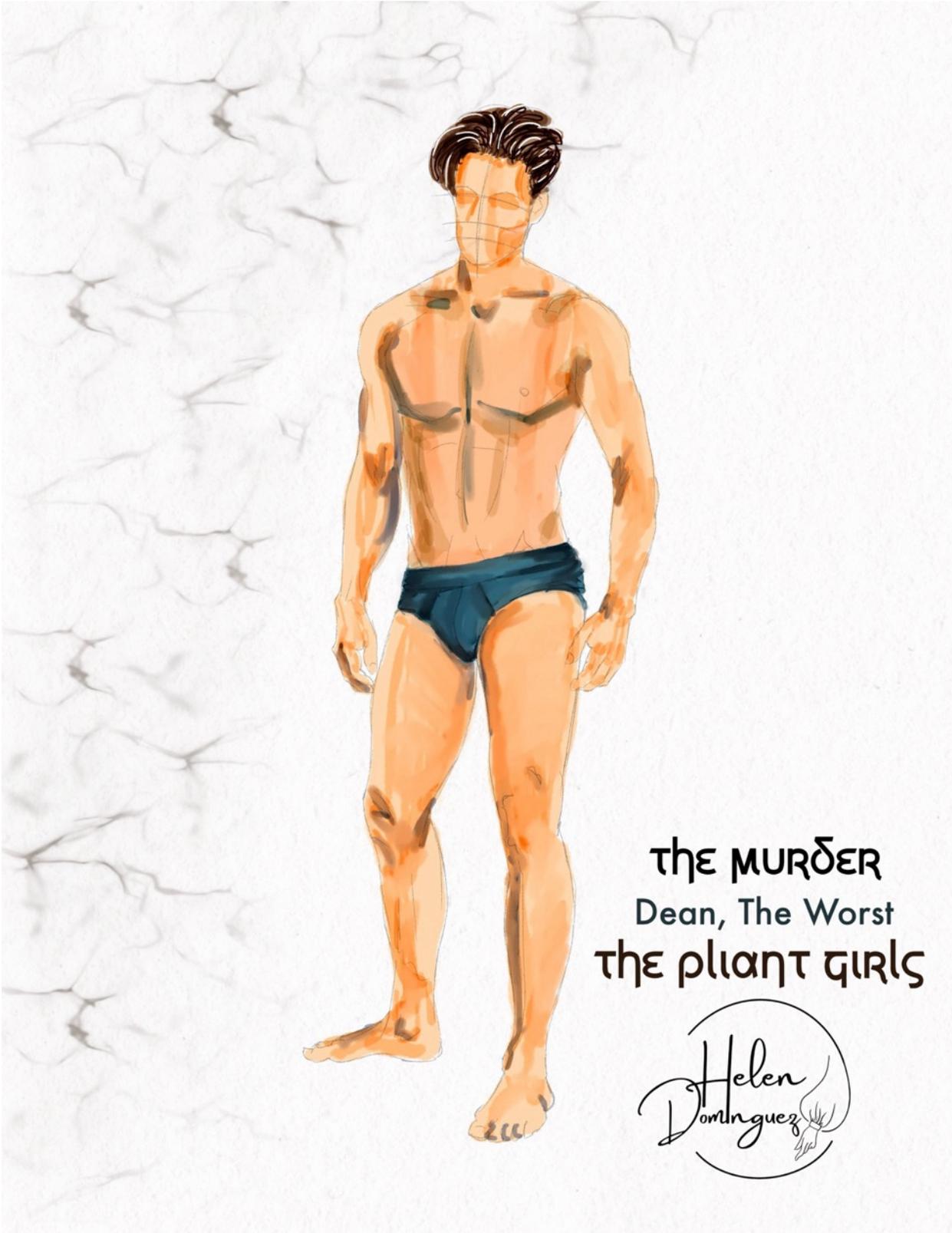
THE MURDER
Kem, seeking connection
THE PLANT GIRLS

*Helen
Dominguez*



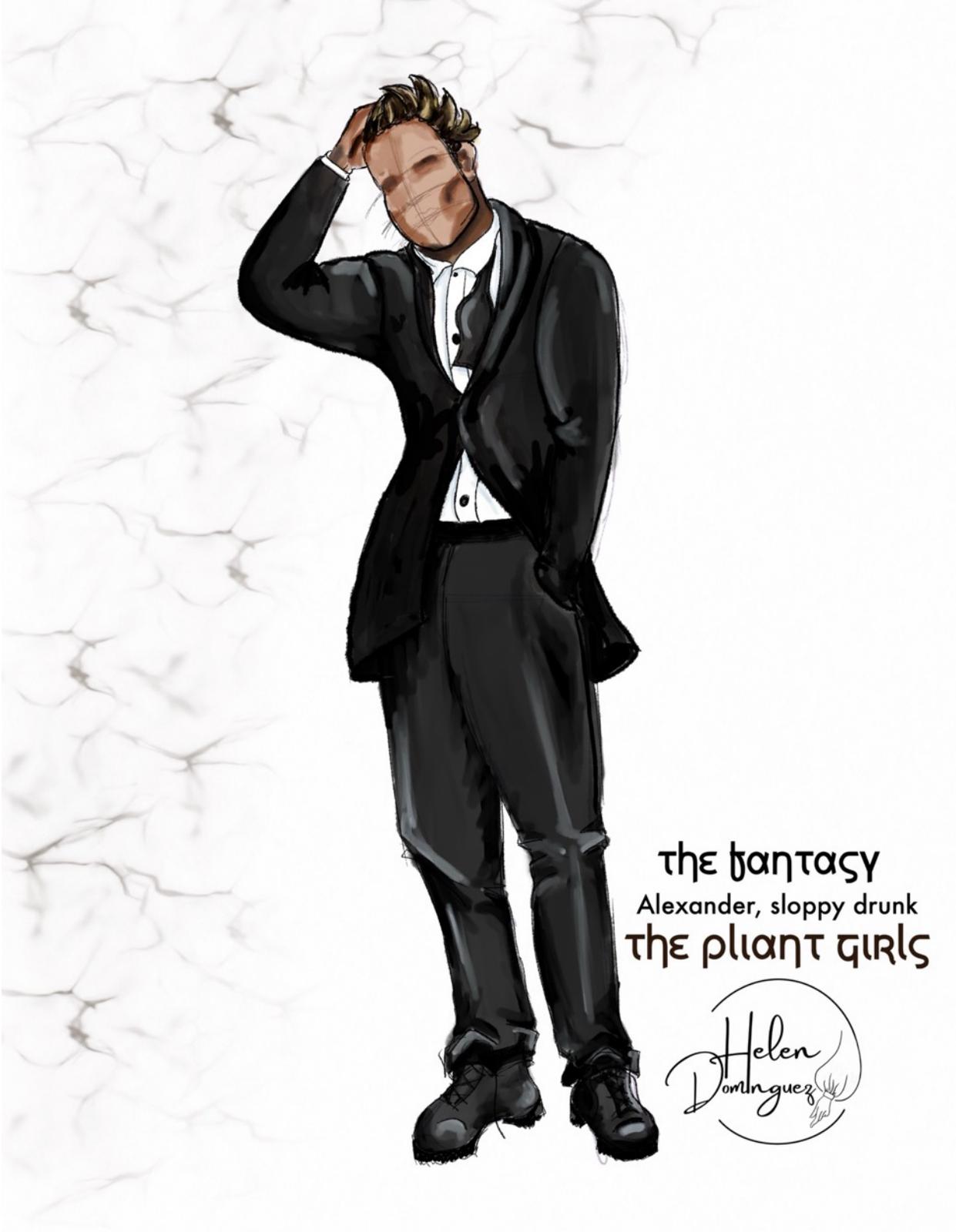
THE FANTASY
Dean, The Worst
THE PLANT GIRLS

Helen
Dominguez



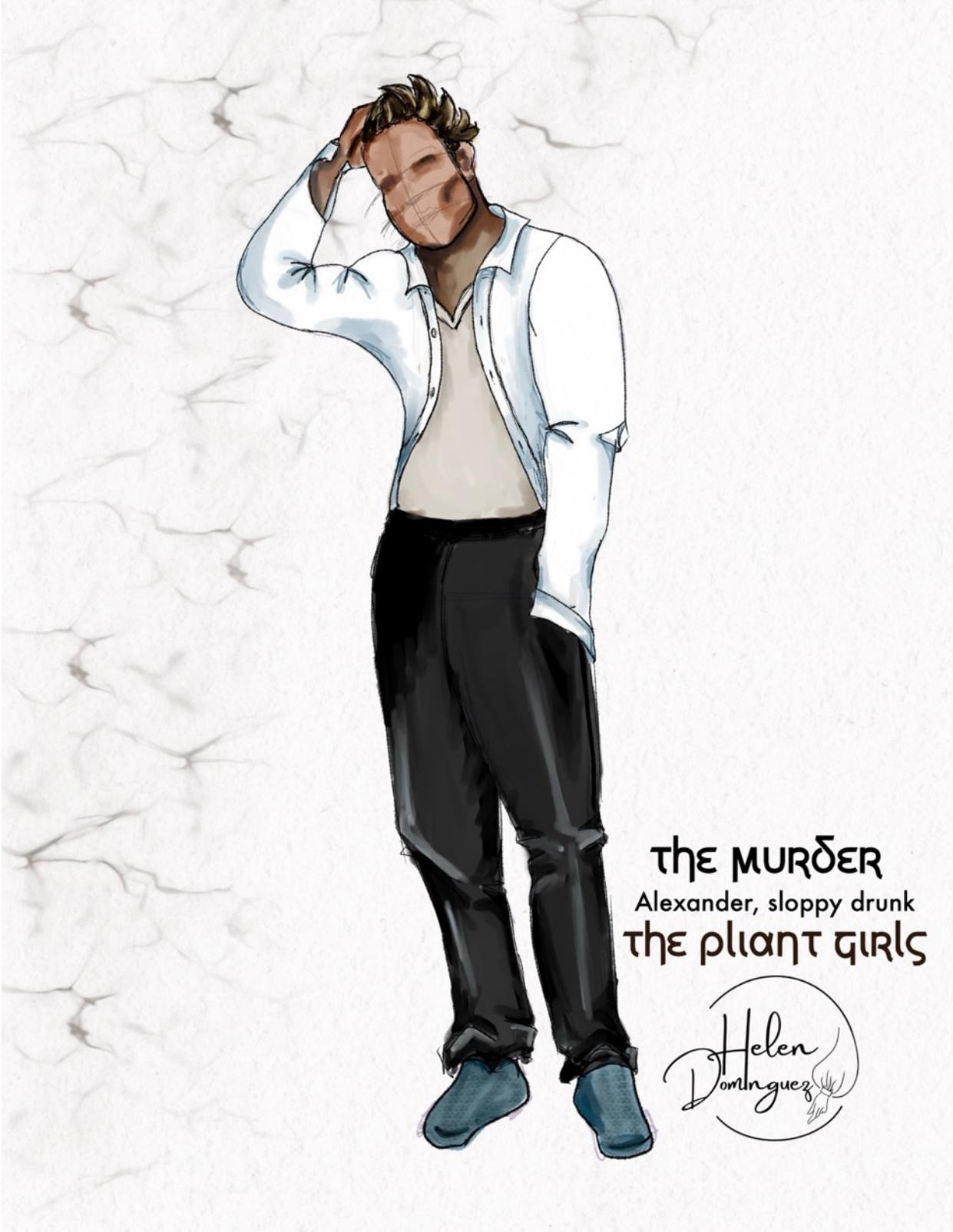
THE MURDER
Dean, The Worst
THE PLANT GIRLS

*Helen
Dominguez*



THE FANTASY
Alexander, sloppy drunk
THE PLANT GIRLS

Helen
Dominguez



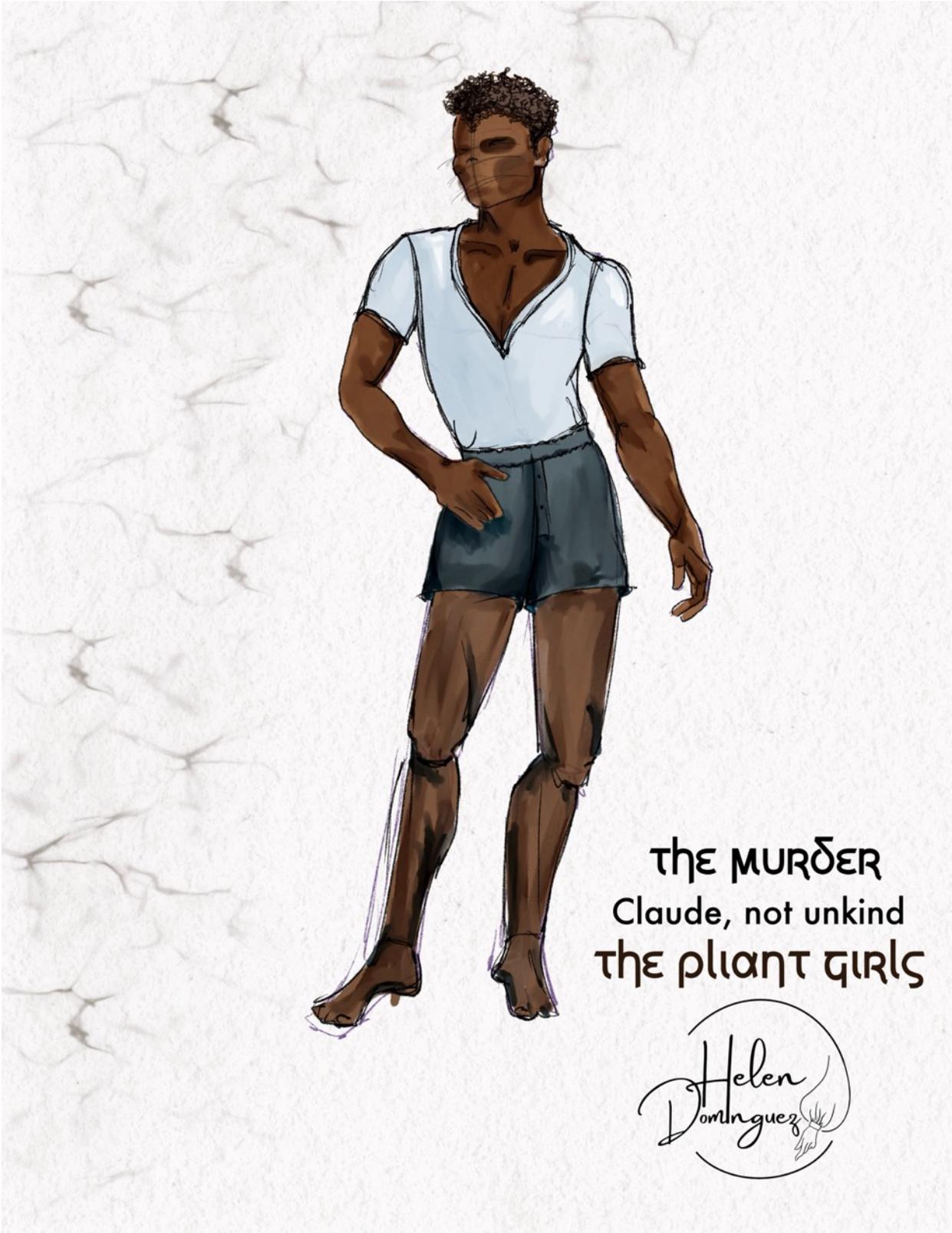
THE MURDER
Alexander, sloppy drunk
THE PLANT GIRLS

Helen
Dominguez



THE FANTASY
Claude, not unkind
THE PLANT GIRLS





THE MURDER
Claude, not unkind
THE PLANT GIRLS

Helen
Dominguez

Paperwork Package

Entrance/Exit Plot with Quick Changes

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE					
1	Character List	Entrance	Costume	Exit	Entrance	Costume	Exit	Entrance	Costume	Exit	Entrance	Costume	Exit	Entrance	Costume	Exit	Entrance	Costume	Exit	Entrance	Costume	Exit	Entrance	Costume	Exit	Entrance	Costume	Exit	Entrance	Costume	Exit	Entrance	Costume	Exit		
2		Scene 1 (1-11)	Scene 2 (11-17)	Scene 3 (18-28)	Scene 4 (28-32)	Scene 5 The Counting (32-40)	Scene 6 (40-48)	Scene 7 Deer (48-51)	Scene 8 (51-53)	Scene 9 (53-56)	Scene 10 (57-66)																									
3	Courtney	Tunic, Distressed Pants, Brown strappy bra, Brown boy leg shorts	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same		
4	Leta	Grey distressed sweater, linen overall pants, beige bra, beige bra	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same		
5	Philomena	Mustard yellow sleeves, grey tank, yellow mermaid skirt, grey leggings, slims	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	
6	Arianna	Orange half sweater, babydoll top, gathered pants, bike shorts, tan top	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	
7	Kay	pleated sweater, parachute skirt, distressed footed tights, asymmetrical bra, brafs	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	
8	Father	Striped button down, grey slacks, dress socks, dress shoes	10	12	same	17																														
9	Marcus						18 Full Tuxedo	18						32 take off top hat	33																					
10	Kem						18 Full Tuxedo	19						32 take off top hat	35	take off bowtie, unbutton collar, 40 open jacket																				
11	Dean						18 Full Tuxedo	21						36 take off jacket	37																					
12	Alexander						18 Full Tuxedo	22						32 take off top hat and jacket	47																					
13	Claude						18 Full Tuxedo	28						36 take off top hat and bowtie	40																					

	A	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	AM	AN	AO	AP	AQ	AR	AS	AT
1	Character List	Entrance	Costume	Exit	Entrance	Costume	Exit	Entrance	Costume	Exit	Entrance	Costume	Exit	Entrance	Costume	Exit
2		Scene 11 (66-71)	Scene 12 (71-89)	Scene 13 The Reaping 89-	Scene 14 The Murder 94	End of Show (95)										
3	Courtney	Same	71	71	Same											
4	Leta	66	Same	71	71	Same										
5	Philomena	66	Same	71	71	Same										
6	Arianna	66	Same	71	71	Same										
7	Kay	66	66	Same	71	71	Same									
8	Father															
9	Marcus		take off jacket, add top hat	71	77	take off tie and unbutton at collar	78	89/90/92	off suspenders	89/90/92	93					
10	Kem		same as previous, add top hat	71	75	remove suspenders form shoulders	76	92/93	same as previous	92	93					
11	Dean	66	70	take suspenders off shoulders, add top hat	71	82	shirt unbuttoned to waistband	82	89/90/92	same as previous	89/90/93	93				
12	Alexander		70	remove suspenders form shoulders, add top hat	71	76	untuck shirt	77	89/90/92	unbutton shirt all the way	89/90/93	93				
13	Claude		70	unbutton top button, add top hat	71	74	take off jacket and suspenders	75	89/90/92	remove tux shirt	89/90/93	93				
14																

Pieces List

	A	B	C	D		
1	The Pliant Girls					
2						
3		Character	Performer	Piece		
4		Courtney	Amber Coleman	Dark brown strappy sports bra		
5				Dark brown cross waist shorts		
6				Green Build Tunic		
7				Distressed knit pants		
8				Leather armbands		
9						
10				Wedding Dress		
11				Red Stilhetos		
12				Deer Mask		
13				Muzzle		
14						
15				modesty thong		
16				Leta	Ella Romaine	Beige bra
17						Beige highwaist brief
18						Grey crop distressed sweater
19		Suspender pants				
20						
21		Wedding Dress				
22		Red Stilhetos				
23		Muzzle				
24						
25		modesty thong				
26		Philomena	Shae Allin	Taupe One piece skims		
27				Grey Distressed Tank top		
28				Mustard Vionnet Sleeves		
29				Yellow knit mermaid skirt		
30				warmers		
31						
32				Wedding Dress		
33				Red Stilhetos		
34				Deer Mask		
35				Deer Antlers		
36				Muzzle		
37						
38				modesty thong		

	A	B	C	D	E	
39		Arianna	Pearl Mass	Oatmeal longline sportsbra		
40				Oatmeal biker shorts, long		
41				Cream Distressed knit long sleeve		
42				cropped turtle neck top		
43				Babydoll top		
44				Cinched leg lightweight pants		
45						
46				pearl necklace approx. 48"		
47				Wedding Dress		
48				Red Stilhetos		
49				Deer Mask		
50				Deer Antlers		
51				Muzzle		
52				modesty thong		
53				Kay	Sarah Sulewski	Light Asymmetrical sports bra
54						Light boy cut Briefs
55						Off shoulder knit crop top
56						Parachute skirt
57						Distressed Tights
58						
59		Wedding Dress				
60		Red Stilhetos				
61		Deer Mask				
62		Deer Antlers				
63		Muzzle				
64		modesty thong				
65		Tattoos				
66		Marcus	Joshua Turner	Fitted tuxedo jacket		
67				Top Hat		
68				white undershirt		
69				tuxedo shirt		
70				satin black tie		
71				tuxedo pants		
72				no show black socks		
73				detailed oxford black dress shoes		
74				Black suspenders		
75				chain necklace		
76				Diamond earrings		
77		Tie Bar				
78		Watch				
79		Red Lipstick				
80						

	A	B	C	D
81		Kem	Gianfranco Madonia	Loose tuxedo coat
82				tuxedo shirt
83				white a-shirt
84				Black cumberbund
85				Black bowtie
86				pleated tuxedo pants
87				Black dress socks
88				dance belt
89				blue striped boxer briefs
90				Black dress shoes
91				Black suspenders
92				Top Hat
93				Red Lipstick
94		Dean	Jeremy Fuentes	satin lined peak tuxedo coat
95				white undershirt
96				Tuxedo shirt
97				black bowtie
98				blue bikini briefs
99				Black knee pads
100				black dress socks
101				Black dress shoes, snake skin
102				Dance Belt
103				Black suspenders
104				Top Hat
105		gold earring		
106		gold chain		
107		Red Lipstick		
108		Alexander	Dori Miller	Velvet tuxedo jacket
109				black undone bowtie
110				tuxedo shirt
111				tuxedo pants
112				white short sleeve undershirt
113				black socks
114				Black dress boots
115				black suspenders
116				Top hat
117		Red Lipstick		

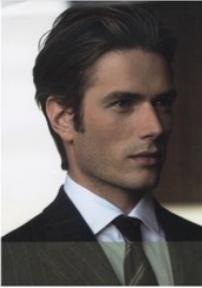
	A	B	C	D
118		Claude	Ethan Garrepy	Double breasted tuxedo Jacket
119				black bow tie
120				Tuxedo shirt
121				Tuxedo pants
122				Black dress socks
123				Paten leather Black dress shoes
124				Vneck white undershirt
125				black suspenders
126				Top Hat
127				black diamond Watch
128		Red Lipstick		
129		Father	Graham Corbett	Blue striped button down
130				Undershirt
131				Dark grey Slacks
132				Blue argyle socks
133				Dress black shoes
134		black leather belt		

Hair and Makeup Plot

Character	Performer	Make Up	Hair	
Courtney	Amber Coleman	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> Basic Corrective eye definiton ok eye color nuetral, golds ok, no pink no lip color </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> Natural </div>	 
Leta	Ella Romaine	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> Basic Corrective eye definiton ok Eye color nuetral, warm no lip color </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> Half up messy ponetail Half up w/ messy french braid </div>	  
Philomen	Shae Allin	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> Basic Corrective eye definiton ok no lip color </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> Hollywood Waves </div>	 
Arianna	Pearl Mass	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> Basic Corrective some pink ok on cheeks and eyes medium amount of eye definition ok </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> Half up pig tails Some bang is ok but mostly off face </div>	  

Character Performer		Make Up		Hair	
Kay	Sarah Sulewski	Basic Corrective no lip color Smudged black eyeliner but not pretty		Two-tone crochet locs	

Character Performer		Make Up		Hair	
Marcus	Joshua Turner	Light Basic Corrective		Current approved cut	

Character Performer		Make Up		Hair	
Kem	Gianfranco Madon	Light Basic Corrective		Brushed back off face A little lift hairspray	

Character Performer		Make Up		Hair	
Dean	Jeremy Fuentes	Light Basic Corrective		Current approved cut	

Character Performer		Make Up		Hair	
Alexander	Dori Miller	Light Basic Corrective		Messy controlled curls Bleached tips	

Character Performer		Make Up		Hair	
Claude	Ethan Garrepy	Light Basic Corrective w/ a little eye definition no eyeshadow		Off face Held back on sides well controled and defined curls in back	
Character Performer		Make Up		Hair	
Father	Graham Corbett	Light Basic Corrective		Side part off face control with prodcut "greasy" ok	

Tattoo Tracking

Kay	Sarah Sulewski			
location	tattoo	type	does it need flexibility/movement	does it have a lot of details
Above right forearm inner arm	We're all mad	printed temporary	no	
Right shoulder blade	Waves	printed temporary	no	
Left lower back	Dark Mermaid	printed temporary	no	yes
Left thigh	Mermaid scales	printed temporary	no	no
left bicep	Gothic Girl	Printed temporary	bicep, no	
Left chest above heart	effervescent (flower w/ hummingbird)	inkbox	yes	
Right calf	extraordinary (jellyfish)	inkbox	yes	
left wrist	snake and dagger	inkbox		
left back bicep elbow	heart and flames	inkbox		
Left rib cage	burning spirit (pheonix)	inkbox		
left calf	goddess of everything	inkbox	yes	
Front Shin left leg	Birds and tree	temporary stick on		
Right arm, shoulder, neck	Floral Shoulder	temporary stick on and drawn	yes	yes
Right side/ribs	IV	Permanent		
Right inner ankle	power fist	Permanent		
Right inner elbox	rejoice (red)	Permanent		
Left inner wrist	Heart beat	Permanent		
Left inner ankle	Heart with airplane	Permanent		

Sample of Fitting Photos and Notes

Arianna







Fitting Notes

Name: P. Mass	Date: 2-9-24
Show: T.P.G.	Character: Arianna
Designer: Helen	Fitter: Ryan Notes: Helen

Costume Piece	Notes	DONE!/Initial
Designer	Full supportive bra for under	
Pants	Add Elastic @ below knee (AK) +4" (or stay tape) +5" +6" (Ankle) Elastic in casing inside -TAKE OUT INVISIBLE ZIPPER (Ryan notes it)	16" circ 16.5" 12.5" 11.5"
Designer	+ Pick color	
Top	Sample patch at 1 1/2 x 3/4 x Lower the arm pit as marked Buttons front "fake it" stitch it cbe	
Sweater sleeves	- threadmark as marked - keep side seam in sweater - follow yoke line from top	
Masks	- Princess & Princess w/o crown	
Heels	- Heel grips order order 9 1/2	



Wedding Dress with Crinoline





Wedding Dress without Crinoline





Fitting Notes

Name: Pearl Mass	Date: 3-7-24
Show: Pleasant Girls	Character: Arianna
Designer: Helen Dominguez	Fitter: Ryan
	Notes:

Costume Piece	Notes	DONE!/Initial
	Will provide spacer for nose 3 lobe & 1 cartilage	
Wedding Dress C	ADD ROOM @ CB 6" AT BACK YOKE SEAM AREA (PINNED) 5" @ WAIST	
Pants	Good	
Babydoll top	- Attach Button - Stitch Hem - Dip top, moose grey	
Sweater	Finish hem * See Helen Reverse applique holes	
Undergarments	Test Blood	

School of **THEATRE + DANCE**

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA / COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

Production Photos



Production photos from the University of Florida's production of *The Pliant Girls* by Meghan Brown; Directed by Michelle Bellaver; Lighting Design by Morgan Lessman; Scenic Design by Kaitlin Hannah; Costume Design by Helen Dominguez; Sound Design by Carter Ashlyn Erickson; Choreography by Jordan Mendelsohn; Production Stage Management by Cheyanne Gilreath; Photos by TF Guntrup & Michael A. Eaddy











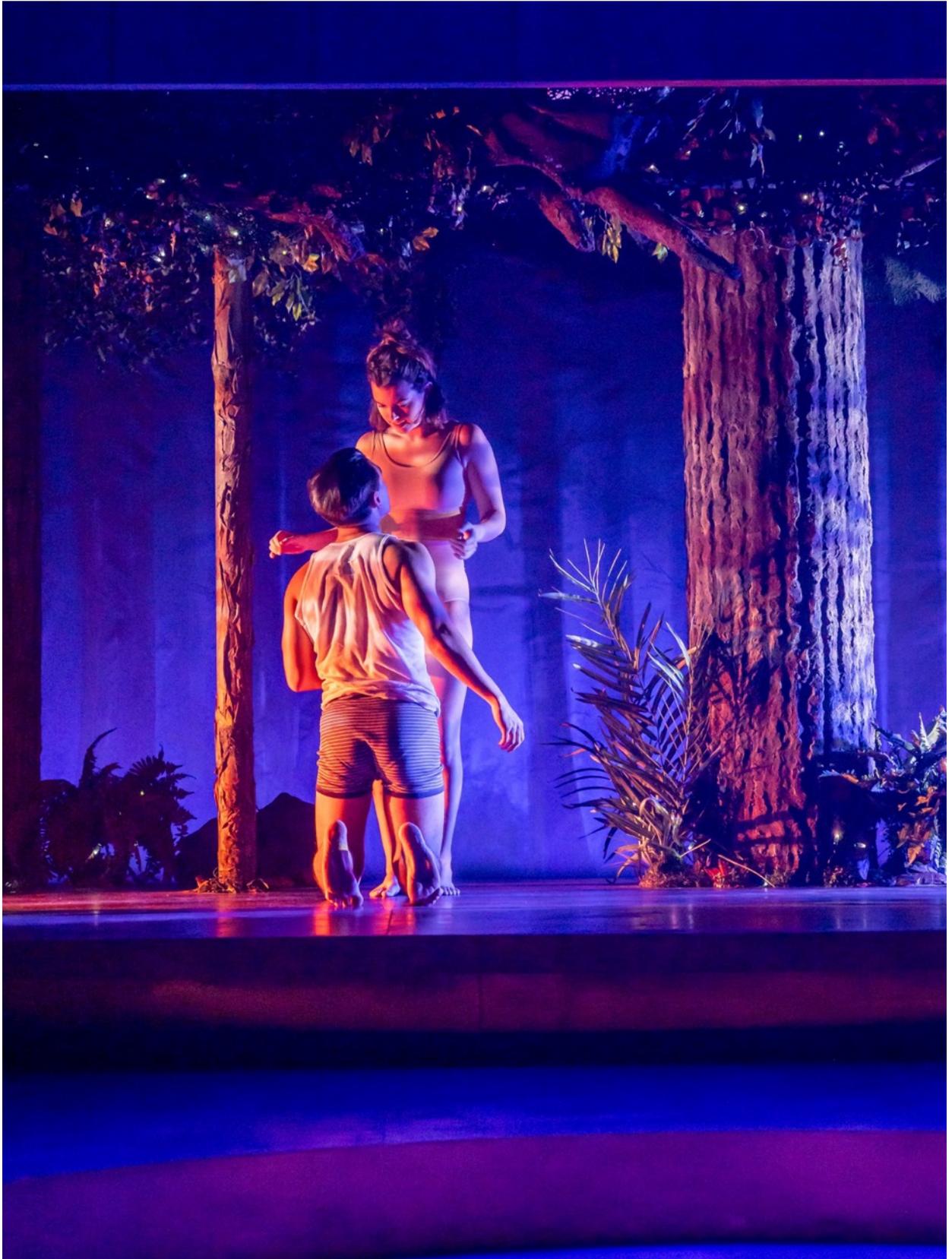






















CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

When I first read *The Pliant Girls*, I was drawn to the hope of forgiveness that is demonstrated amidst deep pain and violence. When the artistic team of director Michelle Bellaver, scenic designer Kaitlin Hanna, lighting designer Morgan Lessman, and sound designer Carter Ashlyn Erickson met for the first time I was challenged by the vision presented. Each person on the artistic team comes to the table with their own experiences and understandings that affect how they respond to a text. Each of these histories are unique with similarities to each other but stark differences as well. For me, the focus on brutality with simplicity and limited color palate initially felt restrictive. It took time and effort to work with the team to push, pull, and build each other's ideas and concepts to create a piece of live entertainment that encompassed brutality and forgiveness, violence and freedom. It makes sense that a script that has such polarizing concepts would take effort and vulnerability to create from a varied team. While the theories of Male and Female Gaze were not often talked about in our design meetings they became to me the embodiment of dueling worlds of looking or feeling. The language from Lessman in light was about harsh and exposing in contrast to warm and holding. For Hannah in scenic there was contrasting environments of cold, smooth, angled materials in contrast to the curved, cyclical environment of the women. For me in costumes it made sense to focus on the obvious implication of looking at people on a stage and the implication of beauty. Beauty is subjective and everyone must wear clothes. However, the clothes that we wear tell the story of us whether we are on stage or not. Costumes tell a purposeful story and it was rewarding to persevere through the many challenges of telling such a purposefully emotional story. I believe that our production of *The Pliant Girls* succeeded in eliciting strong reactions from our audience causing thoughtful reflection about women and beauty and looking and feeling. I hope that it also encouraged conversation as it dazed and astonished.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Helen Dominguez is a Mexican American designer born in Portland, Oregon. She is married to Thomas Peterson, and they have 5 children and currently, 2 grandchildren. Helen has loved costumes, and the stories clothes tell for as long as she can remember but it was not until her children were in youth theatre that she realized her desire to become a professional costume designer. Returning to school when her youngest entered kindergarten Helen pieced together credits from Feather River Community College, Moody Bible Institute, Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, Santa Fe College and finally University of Florida to earn her BFA in Theatre Production with an emphasis in Costume Design in 2021. With the COVID-19 shut down of live entertainment Helen had the opportunity to continue her education, earning her MFA in Theatre: Costume Design in 2024. It is her desire to continue to design costumes for the stories that move us and to do so with the respect of the historical and cultural differences of people and characters with the grounding and unifying commonalities of humanity. She is drawn to works that demonstrate the struggles and sufferings of people but also show joy and offer hope through those trials. This connection to the genuineness and reality of people and their stories, supplies the foundation for which her imagination can spring, creating costumes that are thoughtful, unique and expressive, reflecting each individual character within the show. This philosophy is a core value and Helen hopes to share it by honoring and respecting those she work with as people with struggles, histories, joys and stories of their own whether it be in a creative, educational, or informal environment.

