

ELIZABETH AUDITION

SCENE 1

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1.

Elizabeth Sawyer. Alone. A light tight on her face. Her aria. A moment out of time.

ELIZABETH

I'm not arguing for the end of the world but
then again maybe I am.
This one, anyway.

I imagine you're not sure about this,
you might think I'm jumping the gun.
Fair enough, full disclosure –
wherever I go, people are like:
“Oh there's the witch of Edmonton”
they're like: “you made my cow sick, you made my thatch burn.”
I'm like a disease that only I seem to have caught.
I'm like a plague of locusts that's just one locust.
And the whispering!
Say I'm in line at the well.
If I turn around, the whispering stops. Dead silence.
But somehow it always starts up again.

I can't say I don't have a grudge, because
I do, clearly, I do have a grudge.
But does that detract from my argument, or is it just added texture?

I understand - you're hesitating right now,
you're like: *Is she kidding, is she serious, is she crazy,*
- and those are questions, they are valid questions,
but they are not the *right* questions.
Here is the single thing you should be asking yourself:

Do I have hope that things can get better?

And if you do, then ignore me. You're fine.
But if you don't...
then maybe this is where we start.

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SCENE 2

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4.

*Elizabeth's country cottage. Shabby, poor.
Scratch has just arrived.*

ELIZABETH

The devil?

SCRATCH

Blah blah blah your soul etc.

ELIZABETH

My soul?

SCRATCH

Ripe for the picking.

ELIZABETH

Why *mine*?

SCRATCH

Everybody says you're a witch.
You're not, of course. But! would you like to be?

ELIZABETH

I was warned about you.

SCRATCH

Everybody is warned about me, it doesn't seem to make much of a difference.
Mind if I sit down?

ELIZABETH

As a matter of fact, Yes.

SCRATCH

(coaxing)

Offer me a drink. Common courtesy! Can't hurt, can it?

ELIZABETH

Nobody sits in my cabin but me.

*A moment. Scratch elaborately leans but
doesn't sit.*

SCRATCH

How would you like me to fuck up some people for you.

How would you like...revenge.

ELIZABETH

You want me to sell you my soul.

Men make it sound like they're doing you a favor when what they really want is a favor done for them.

SCRATCH

Astute! That's very astute, and I hear you.

But I would say - think of it as more an exchange between friends.

Think of it kind of like a pot-luck.

ELIZABETH

(despite herself)

...A "pot-luck"?

SCRATCH

A pot-luck is what happens in the future, when people don't worry about food.

And instead of everybody just eating their own food as fast as they can find it, people get together, usually outside, usually somewhere uncomfortable and on a patio and with too many bugs, and everybody pretends not to notice how many bugs there are, they talk about the sunset, and they eat each other's food. Slowly. Over a great deal of time. And everybody wants to go home long before they actually do.

ELIZABETH

Oh.

SCRATCH

Something to look forward to!

You could practice, with me.

I bring power and reckless lack of consequence. You bring your soul.

A beat.

ELIZABETH

If I "pot-luck" my soul...

SCRATCH

Yes?

ELIZABETH

—And that's a big *if*—

SCRATCH

—pure hypotheticals, I understand—

ELIZABETH

What do I get?

SCRATCH

Oh! Well that's an easy one. That's where it gets easy.

ELIZABETH

Okay...

SCRATCH

You tell me. The villagers who are cruel to you? Make a list. Their cows get pox. The girls who giggle behind their hands? Warts on the hands. I mean, it all sort of depends on you, at that point.

ELIZABETH

And what would you do with it? My soul?

SCRATCH

What have *you* done with it so far?

ELIZABETH

Nothing much, I guess.

SCRATCH

Then you won't miss it.

ELIZABETH

Nobody wakes up in the middle of the night? Nobody gets an earache or a toothache or a weird uncanny ache-ache that won't seem to go away?

SCRATCH

Nobody's reported those kinds of symptoms.

ELIZABETH

Oh.

SCRATCH

So, what do you think?

ELIZABETH

Can I change my mind? If I say Yes, can I change it back?

SCRATCH

Oh! no. No no. No take-backs.

ELIZABETH

And what if I say No?

SCRATCH

You know, people ask me this sometimes. And my sort of standard – the answer I like to give – I mean, I can get dramatic, I can be like: *I tear you apart, I rip you limb from – you know? – I burn your entire –* like, I can do that, but honestly, the answer I like to give is: I leave. I just leave. And your entire life continues on, exactly as it was, zero change, as if I were never here. And one day, maybe next week or maybe ten years from now...or maybe on your death-bed... One day you ask yourself why is it that you have been so relentlessly miserable, why is it that you never ever, not even once, had the chance to make yourself less unhappy. And then at that moment, whenever it comes, you think of this. You think of this conversation. And you think: *Oh. I did have the chance. I did have it. I just said No.*

A long beat. And then:

ELIZABETH

No thank you.

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SCENE 3

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~~Well, you're doing pretty well so far~~

They drink.

ELIZABETH

You look very young.

SCRATCH

I know.

ELIZABETH

Did you choose that guise for some practical purpose? Or do you just like to look young?

SCRATCH

Do you want the real answer, or the politic answer?

ELIZABETH

Do you think you're in the hut of a politic person?

Scratch acknowledges the humor.

SCRATCH

(a little self-conscious)

Well, there is something about young men. A certain... luminosity, if you know what I mean. A young man is a creature with a whole future ahead of him, and things might be hard for him at some point, but generally he will succeed, and the hard things will only be the things he had to master on his way to success. So when you look at a young man, who is making you an offer – you feel good inside, subconsciously I mean, you feel like you are participating in a story about possibility and a bright future. You feel like maybe those things could apply to you too. Do you know what I mean?

ELIZABETH

(soft)

Yes I know what you mean.

SCRATCH

Does it tarnish the picture for you, hearing the reasoning behind it?

Elizabeth looks at him closely.

ELIZABETH

No, I still feel it. A certain... aura of success. It's palpable.

SCRATCH

You know, I used to appear as a woman much more often, back in the day. First I tried being very beautiful, and then I tried being much older, kind of weathered. And then I just stopped altogether and I started being a man.

ELIZABETH

Why did you stop?

SCRATCH

(honest)

I didn't like how people looked at me.

Day to day, being looked at with a kind of...

I don't know, either way it got under my skin, I had to stop.

(A moment, in which her silence speaks. He realizes:)

I'm so sorry.

That was –

indelicate // I'm sorry.

ELIZABETH

(a little raw)

Why are you sorry? That's your whole pitch, isn't it?

All the ways that people look at me, all those sad ugly ways – I could upgrade for the price of a soul?

SCRATCH

Yes... but I wasn't making a pitch right then. We were just... having a night-cap.

ELIZABETH

(genuinely probing)

Are we? "Just"?

SCRATCH

There's a time and a place for business. I thought we were off the clock right now.

Tell me if I'm wrong?

This means something to her.

ELIZABETH

...No.

Let's keep it ...off the clock.

The air changes.

SCRATCH

Cheers to off the clock.

Cheers.

ELIZABETH

Pause.

Why haven't you ever left?

SCRATCH

Where would I go?

ELIZABETH

SCRATCH

There are so many places, I don't know how to answer that.

ELIZABETH

But you need a ticket, yes? to go anywhere.
Or a horse, or a donkey, or a donkey-cart.
And for any of those things, you need money.
And for money you need an income, and for an income you need employment
and for employment, you need employers
and for employers, the first thing you need
is not *skill*, contrary to what you would think
(skill is acquired after all)
but a *reputation*.

SCRATCH

You've thought about this.

ELIZABETH

No, I've lived it.

(beat)

I used to be a maid in the castle, when Sir Arthur's father was alive.

SCRATCH

I didn't know.

ELIZABETH

It was a long time ago. And it didn't end well.

(beat)

Sir Arthur and I were... There was a time...
Very young, very stupid, but...
I thought we'd get married and then it wouldn't matter, the whole thing of my reputation.
(beat)

We didn't, as you can see, get married.

SCRATCH

Ah.

ELIZABETH

Or rather, *he* did. Just not to me.

(beat)

It made me very unwelcome at the castle, and later in the village, understandably.
Deflowered, etc. Tarnished.
How easily we jump from tarnished to untouchable.

SCRATCH

(means it)

I'm sorry.

ELIZABETH

It's so strange to talk about myself.

SCRATCH

Am I prying?

ELIZABETH

Yes, but don't you mean to be?

SCRATCH

A little, but I'll stop if you're uncomfortable.

ELIZABETH

I'm not uncomfortable.

(A pause and then Elizabeth sort of blurts:)

You're very good-looking.

SCRATCH

(startled, a little flushed)

I change shapes, as we // discussed

ELIZABETH

discussed, yes, we did.

SCRATCH

So it's cheating. You know?

I'm not luck-of-the-draw. I just chose this one.

ELIZABETH

Some people know how to dress themselves. That's a skill-set too.
Wouldn't you say?

SCRATCH

I don't like compliments.

ELIZABETH

Just say: Thank you.

SCRATCH
(after a moment)

Thank you.