

SIR ARTHUR AUDITION SCENE 1

23

SIR ARTHUR

Argument used to be an art you know
ancient Greeks and
Syrians? probably the Syrians?
Mesopotamia!
(where's Mesopotamia?)
Here, have a date
have a fresh date
Winnifred!

(She comes running)

A date!

(She holds out a bowl of dates. Dimissing her:)

(thank you Winnifred)
anyway
advanced civilizations train their young men to argue
to think like lawyers, but with *heart*
lawyer-poets
think we miss that, nowadays
violence and
think we miss that.

(with increasing nostalgia that kind of takes him over:)

Cuddy's mom was a real ...
she could argue like a man
she could look you straight in the eyes and just
decimate your argument
just tear you apart in a thousand ways and

(this has gone to an unexpectedly lonely place)

I loved being decimated by her.

(And then Sir Arthur rallies. Back to normal! Addressing Frank:)

I don't say this lightly, young man, but
I have some friends whose daughters
are a little higher in station than you might normally –
but I think with my strong advocacy, you might be able to—
you know, just sort of, get some irons in the fire.

Winnifred is shooting him glares over the dishes.

FRANK

(this is a Yes)

I couldn't possibly impose on you, sir.

SIR ARTHUR

Not an imposition at all! Not at all!
(Winnifred! A digestif!)

(Winnifred comes over with a bottle.)

Wish young Cuddy would let his old dad *impose*
but happy to, happy to.
You know, actually Frank, I've been thinking—

FRANK

...Yes??

(Winnifred pours the digestif in Frank's lap.)

Hey!!

SIR ARTHUR

Watch what you're doing, girl!

WINNIFRED

Sorry. I'm so sorry.
I slipped.

She dabs at Frank's lap. He can't look at her.

FRANK

It's fine, it's fine.

WINNIFRED

Sorry.

FRANK

It's okay, that's enough.

CUDDY

It's not like he *drowned*.

*Winnifred withdraws, and is gone.
Sir Arthur gets up.*

SIR ARTHUR

Well!
It's a beautiful day outside, lots of things to be done.
Run along boys,
sun'll go out one of these days
(scientists say)

so
get some sun.

FRANK
(this is it!)

Wait – just before –
you started to say –
What was it you were thinking about, sir?

SIR ARTHUR

Ah!!
Good boy, good reminder,
was just thinking
let's take the horses out later
give this old man some exercise.

FRANK

The horses...

SIR ARTHUR

Yeah, horses and dogs...

FRANK

There wasn't anything else you were going to...?

SIR ARTHUR

No, don't think so...

*(senses but doesn't understand Frank's
disappointment)*

No horses today?

FRANK

No, yeah, of course yes. Love it.

SIR ARTHUR

Great! See you later.

*He lumbers off, digestif in hand, and is
gone. A beat. Frank is deflated. Cuddy can't
help himself:*

CUDDY

How are you feeling?

FRANK

What's it to you?

SIR ARTHUR

AUDITION SCENE 2

69

11.

*The banquet hall, but this time it's empty.
Sir Arthur sits alone in his chair.
This is his aria. He addresses the framed
portrait of his dead wife.*

SIR ARTHUR

Well
update from the field is:
the boy is getting bigger.

Uh
he's not very much like me
I guess he's more like you
in the eyes
but also he's not really like you either
which sort of *demands* that one
take him for himself alone
which, uh,
is harder for me than it generally was for you.

Frank is doing well!
you would have liked him, he's really...
he's a go-getter
which mattered less to you than it does to me, but
he's also very funny,
he reminds me of you, a little,
I'm not sure why
maybe how it feels to be around him
which is: you generally feel like you're more interesting
than you thought you were -
which is: how I felt around you.

Um

The castle is...
a castle
and
not to be...
but it still feels
empty
so...
that's a thing. An everyday sort of thing.

[dramatic]

(beat – a burst)

I don't wear your clothes anymore!
 I know I told you that I used to
 sneak into your room and put on your clothes
 and stand in front of the mirror
 and see if I could see you in me
 and
 I guess I did that for a few years after you died
 maybe five years
 or six years
 or maybe I guess until our boy was
 about ten or eleven but
 then I stopped.
 I think I told you that I stopped before I actually stopped.
 But then I did actually stop, so...

What else.

(this also bursts out:)

I don't know how to raise a boy
 in this world.
 What do I teach him?
 If I let him be gentle
 he'll just be hurt by someone down the line.
 Nobody trusts boys who are gentle,
 it brings out everybody's hidden cruelty.
 So I tell him *Be tough, be tough*
 and I watch this sort of
 blunt thing grow in his eyes
 like he's disappointed in how disappointed I am
 but
 if he could just *be tough* then I would know
 that I'm raising him well enough to get by
 and then I could worry about: Is he Gentle enough
 and that could be like a
 luxury worry
 like, "Does he know how to be Kind"
 like, that could be something
 from time to time I would remind him
 to be Kind
 all the while knowing that
 he will survive, he will survive, he will outlast me.

And also we can't talk to each other.
 Frank and I can talk to each other!
 We talk all the time!
 We talk about falcons and hunting and

women and
politics and
I don't know
I don't know.

(this is hard to say out loud, but)

I don't think
Cuddy
is ever going to give us an heir.
And
I think when we were younger, I had this sort of
Optimism
about him
and about us
and about our future as a family but
I think it was *your* optimism that I had, actually
and now
that's gone
so...

(surprises himself with this:)

Sometimes I feel like I'm dying
and I know I'm not
but I feel like I am.

*(long beat in which there is so much more
he would like to say, but it all seems
suddenly futile)*

OK I guess that's all.

SIR ARTHUR AUDITION SCENE 3

72

12.

The castle. Banquet scene. As usual. Winnifred and the dishes, etc. But Sir Arthur has the weight of a secret on his chest and Cuddy is in a good mood, a little amped. He's coming from Morris practice. He directs a friendly beaming energy to Winnifred when she passes.

CUDDY

—and I'm not saying I've never *lead* Morris practice before, but today was really the first time I've gotten to teach. You forget how confusing things can be for a beginner, once you've been in the biz for a while - but basically it just comes down to two basic steps, the first being left-hop, right-hop (and so on) - and the second being a *double* step: left-right left-hop – right-left // right-hop—

SIR ARTHUR

(cuts in)

Cuddy my lad.

CUDDY

...Yeah?

SIR ARTHUR

I have been thinking.

CUDDY

Okay...?

SIR ARTHUR

About this castle. About this land.
About our family name, and the weight of that name
and how each of us, in our own way, contributes to this legacy.

CUDDY and FRANK

Okay... // ...um...

SIR ARTHUR

And it's not easy for me to say this, and I know this could be hurtful
if viewed in the wrong light, but
I hope you can understand the *right* light in which to view this
when I say that I have chosen Frank
to be my heir.

Uhhhh...
What?

CUDDY

...What?

FRANK
(stunned)

SIR ARTHUR
You are still my son, and an important member of this family, Cuddy.
But a man with two sons has more chance of a *legacy*
than a man with one
and
in this particular case
Sir John has made an offer
to Frank
of his daughter.

What?

CUDDY and FRANK

*At the same time Winnifred drops a dish.
It shatters. They all turn to look at her.*

Sorry.

WINNIFRED
(dazed)

The men turn away and ignore her again.

Dad, what are you talking about!

CUDDY

Hear me out—

SIR ARTHUR

His *daughter*?

FRANK

*Winnifred is a little dizzy. She sits down. The
men don't even notice this. She holds her
stomach.*

SIR ARTHUR
I was going to mention that to you earlier, Frank
but I needed a moment to get my thoughts in order.

Cuddy, I know this might seem upsetting
 but believe me, it's for your good. *Our* good.
 Frank and Sir John's daughter will get married
 (we looked at the calendar, Frank,
 we were thinking next month but
 we should do an avail-check)
 but
 that will just – clear up some space for *you*, Cuddy.
 To just... be you.
 Maybe you want to be in a monastery?
 Maybe you want to become a sort of... wandering scholar?
 Maybe—

CUDDY
(a pathetic plea)

But I have a girlfriend.

SIR ARTHUR

Cuddy...

WINNIFRED
(to Frank, low)

What about us!?

FRANK
(to Winnifred)

I didn't know...

CUDDY

But I have a girlfriend—!

WINNIFRED

You said the plan was *Us*!

SIR ARTHUR

Cuddy, please believe me, I want you to be // happy—

FRANK

I just need to // think...

CUDDY

— You just haven't met her yet!

SIR ARTHUR

— your mother would have wanted // you to be happy—