

CUDDY AUDITION

SCENE 1

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2.

*A bar. Scratch and Cuddy Banks.
Back in the flow of time.*

CUDDY

The devil?

SCRATCH

Your soul, blood-pact, endless riches.

CUDDY

Endless?

SCRATCH

Power: reckless, abusable. Fame!

CUDDY

Fame?

SCRATCH

Have to pick, can't have it all, but sure, fame.

CUDDY

Huh.

(pause)

I don't know why you're coming to me. I've never even gotten in trouble with the law.

SCRATCH

But you want to.

CUDDY

But I haven't.

SCRATCH

(shrugs, easy)

I'm just as interested in what you *want* as what you *do*.

CUDDY

You been to my father's place?

SCRATCH

Nah.

CUDDY

Sir Arthur, he owns the castle.

SCRATCH

Nope.

CUDDY

He's super important, everybody knows him.

SCRATCH

No.

CUDDY

My dad is a real son-of-a-bitch, you haven't been to his place?

SCRATCH

He lacks imagination.

CUDDY

(*a little flattered*)

...Oh.

SCRATCH

You, on the other hand, have potential.

Cuddy gets a little excited by this.

CUDDY

I perform in a Morris troupe, actually, if you want to know. Me and my friends do Morris-dancing, maybe you've heard of us, maybe you've seen us, maybe—

SCRATCH

I didn't mean the dancing.

CUDDY

...Oh.

SCRATCH

Although it's good to have hobbies.

CUDDY

[having to explain that]

It's not a hobby, I keep –
my dad says that all the time too, I'm like
Dad
this is not a *hobby*
this is *my life*.

SCRATCH

—Of course.

CUDDY

The Morris dance is very intricate
very raw and intricate.
It's like... seriously underrated.

SCRATCH

I stand corrected.

Pause.

CUDDY

Who else have you been to?

SCRATCH

In my lifetime? In the world?

CUDDY

In Edmonton.

(this is loaded:)

Frank Thorney?

SCRATCH

Who?

CUDDY

(in love and equally in hate)

Everybody is all, “Ooh Frank Thorney.”
My dad is like, obsessed with Frank Thorney.
He found him working in a field and like, took him to our castle
and for the past five years he’s always like
“You should go hiking, Frank loves the outdoors”
“You should eat more meat, Frank eats meat”
“You should go on more dates, girls love Frank”
and it’s like, uhh, hello, I’m your *son*
what’s the BFD with Frank??

(beat)

So...in the whole town, just me?

SCRATCH

You’re one of the few.

CUDDY

(he’s never been special before)

Oh...

(then – jealous)

Who are the others?

SCRATCH

Does it matter?

CUDDY

The old witch Sawyer?
I bet it's Sawyer.

SCRATCH

Why do you say that?

CUDDY

Everyone says she makes the crops wither
Everyone says she makes the cows dry up
Everyone says she dances with the devil in the pale moonlight.
And that's you, right? So...

Scratch sees Cuddy's insecurity and prepares for the kill.

SCRATCH

I can't confirm or deny that right now, Cuddy.

CUDDY

Do you guys hang out all the time?
Do you, like, fly around on her broomstick together?
Just nod your head.
If it's Yes just look to the right.
Or if it's Yes, cough twice.
Or if it's Yes—

SCRATCH

The real question at hand is: what do *you* want?

CUDDY

...Me?

SCRATCH

Some men want wealth. Some men want land.
And some men... many men... want love.

Cuddy hastens to dispatch this train of thought.

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SCENE 2

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The hot feeling surges into murder. Cuddy flings himself at Frank, maybe trying to put hands around his neck. Whatever the gesture is, Frank subdues him quickly, pushing him back with a laugh. Cuddy surges forward again, and Frank puts a hand square on Cuddy's chest and pushes him backward. A moment. Cuddy's rage doesn't melt, but it is confused by a bolt of pure longing. Without knowing what he's going to do, he puts his hand on Frank's chest. Is it a shove? Will it become one? Neither of them really knows. A moment that is confused and raw and full of possibility and also weird and awkward. And then Winnifred re-enters.

BOYS.

I'm cleaning up your banquet
so
maybe you could take this
outside.

WINNIFRED

(They jolt apart.)

I was just leaving.

FRANK

*He walks past Winnifred and out.
A beat.
Cuddy sinks back into his chair.
He puts his head in his hands.*

WINNIFRED

(can't help it)

... Are you OK?

All of this comes pouring out of Cuddy:

CUDDY

I hate him.

WINNIFRED

...I know.

CUDDY

Sometimes I really fucking hate him
 the way he takes up space and
 sort of sprawls around and
 the way he *talks*
 and

WINNIFRED

I know.

CUDDY

And then also I wanna just
 put my hands around his throat and
 squeeze and then
 I want to mash my face into his face
 and I want to be *so close* to him
 I want to *wear* him.

WINNIFRED

I know what that's like.

Cuddy looks up at her.

CUDDY

Yeah I bet you do.

A beat between them.

WINNIFRED

So you know about us?

CUDDY

Yeah.

WINNIFRED

(*with hope*)

Did Frank tell you?

CUDDY

No.

WINNIFRED

Oh.

How do you know?

(Cuddy hesitates – still hopeful:)

Is it like... is there sort of an energy between us? Like you can just tell by looking at us
 that there's an unbreakable connection?

CUDDY

...No.

WINNIFRED

Oh.

CUDDY

The devil told me, actually?

WINNIFRED

...The devil?

CUDDY

Yeah.

WINNIFRED

Oh.

CUDDY

We were just talking. And we ended up talking about Frank. And he told me about you guys. This is all cone-of-silence.

WINNIFRED

Okay...

CUDDY

Actually the whole thing is, the whole mashing-my-face-into — my whole Frank thing is also cone-of-silence.

WINNIFRED

Well, me too.

CUDDY

Oh yeah
I guess that's right
you too.

Beat.

WINNIFRED

What else did the devil say?

A conflicted beat. Cuddy struggles and then:

CUDDY

I asked him for something and... He said OK.

WINNIFRED

Okay...

CUDDY

And sometimes I'm so glad that I asked for it,
and sometimes I think it's not gonna happen, unless I make it happen,
but then
sometimes
I guess I wish that I hadn't asked for that thing at all. And I feel sad. And I feel kinda
sick.
Uh
Do you know what I mean?

WINNIFRED

No.

(pause)

What did you ask for?

CUDDY

(almost tells her and then)

It's complicated.

(pause – can't hold back:)

I just don't understand how you can wanna murder someone and then also want them to
be closer to you than your own skin

I mean

is that love? is that hate?

like, what even *is* that?

Is that how you feel?

WINNIFRED

I think I used to feel like that, but lately I feel really sad

CUDDY

Oh

WINNIFRED

Really sad and really cold

like it's constantly five degrees colder than I want it to be

I mean I know it's *not*

I know it's totally just me

but that's how I feel.

CUDDY

I'm sorry.

WINNIFRED

It's not your fault.

Beat.

CUDDY

Would you like to marry me?

WINNIFRED

...I'm sorry?

CUDDY

I mean. I'm not... probably ideal for you, in some ways,
(like, the most obvious ways)
but in others, I'm really great.

I have money, I have land, I have a title
and you don't have to worry about me lying to you
or sleeping with other women.

WINNIFRED

Um...
are you kidding or serious?

CUDDY

I'm serious.
I'm really serious.

WINNIFRED

Oh. I mean.
That's so nice of you
but
your inheritance...?

CUDDY

We'd need to have a kid to lock it in, but after that...

WINNIFRED

A kid...

CUDDY

You could sort of do you, and I could sort of do me.

WINNIFRED

Your dad is really not gonna want you to marry the maid.

CUDDY

Honestly, my dad is gonna be *so* happy to see me marry someone and have a kid, that it shouldn't be as much of a problem as you'd think it might be.

A beat. She didn't intend to say this, but:

WINNIFRED

Frank used to be so different with me.

CUDDY

Did he?

WINNIFRED

So different, it's like he isn't even the same person now.

We came here, and he just became so different.

But maybe something could happen and he could... change back? Do you think?

I keep thinking that some morning maybe I'll wake up and it'll be like it was, he'll come down to breakfast and just... be himself.

I guess I keep waiting for that.

CUDDY

(gentle)

I think that ship has sailed.

WINNIFRED

How do you know?

CUDDY

Access is a drug, Winnifred.

Once people have it, they don't usually choose to unhook themselves.

A beat. She knows he's right.

WINNIFRED

Can I think about this?

CUDDY

Okay. But like...

how much time do you need?

WINNIFRED

I'm not sure. I mean. A little bit.

CUDDY

Okay...

WINNIFRED

I mean it's a real decision, Cuddy, I need to think about it.

CUDDY

It seems like a pretty good deal to me.

WINNIFRED

Sure, I mean it is, but also
there was a time in which Frank loved me
and he looked at me in this way
that was sort of like an x-ray
except it was an x-ray of him and not of me
so when I saw him looking at me like that
I could read clear desire down to his bones.
And that's a way of being looked at that is...*life*.
It's a bolt of life going all the way through you.
And that's something you're asking me to give up.
And I'm not saying it's a bad trade but
it's a trade.

A moment.

CUDDY

Well... think about it.

WINNIFRED

Okay.

CUDDY

But think fast.

CUDDY AUDITION

SCENE 3

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Why would I throw it away for a maid?

(straight to Winnifred, cold)

I've always thought the girl was strange.

Winnifred gets up and walks out of the room.

SIR ARTHUR

(A beat. He's uncomfortable. Cuddy is completely shut down.)

Well boys,
I know this was hard but
I think it was a good talk and
Let's all walk it off, and just...
I'm gonna just...
Okay! All right! We got this.

He makes some sporting gestures that don't comfort Cuddy and don't connect with Frank, and then he leaves. A long silence.

Cuddy sits, devastated. Frank hesitates, watching him. There is nothing cruel in Frank right now. He feels the weight of Cuddy's pain, and it doesn't make him particularly happy.

FRANK

Not that it probably matters but your dad didn't... say anything to me.
So. It's not like I had any kinda... heads-up, or...

CUDDY

It wasn't about the land.
I don't actually care if you have the land, or the castle, or any of this bullshit - (I just wanted to be a morris dancer) - but his *name*...
You can't understand, but—

FRANK
(quiet)

I do.

A moment. Cuddy looks at him.

CUDDY

Yeah?

FRANK

Yeah I understand.

CUDDY

Oh.

FRANK

(not mean or flip)

I'm still gonna take it though.
I can't not take it.
But I understand.

A moment between them. It is stripped of contention – oddly intimate. A recognition of sorts, with the games gone.

CUDDY

And Winnifred?

FRANK

Well.
She's having my kid.

CUDDY

So that was true?

FRANK

Yeah.

CUDDY

What are you gonna do?

FRANK

Well
I'm gonna marry Sir John's daughter
and take your family name
and get somewhere. Finally I'm gonna get somewhere.
And I guess also I'll feel really shitty for a while
when I think about Winnifred
and I'm gonna have to learn to not think about her
and once I learn that, I think I'll feel okay again.
You know?

CUDDY

Do you love her?

FRANK

Yes, but that matters less than it should.
Do *you* love her?

CUDDY

Have you met me?!

A moment of shared humor – oddly affectionate:

FRANK

Look... for what it's worth, maybe now you can get what you want.

CUDDY

I don't think so.

FRANK

Your dad will be off your back, for one thing.
Maybe now you can live it up.

CUDDY

I don't think I'm gonna get what I want.

FRANK

Why not? You wanna be a morris-dancer? be a morris-dancer!
You wanna...hang out with whoever? Nobody cares.

CUDDY

Not "whoever."

FRANK

Sorry?

CUDDY

(with intention)

Not "whoever," Frank.

A moment between them. Frank understands what Cuddy meant. He feels the weight of longing directed at him. He's not sure what to do with this.

Cuddy reaches out and touches Frank's face. Tender, dangerous. Cuddy's thumb over Frank's lower lip. A beat. And then –

FRANK

I can't.

CUDDY

I know.

FRANK

Your dad, and
everything
pretty much everything
super messy

CUDDY

I know that.

This is the only thing Frank can offer in this moment – and as such, the tone is oddly gentle:

FRANK

I'll let you fight me.

CUDDY

What?

FRANK

I'll let you fight me.

CUDDY

I don't want to fight you.

FRANK

If you want
you could just
we could just
fight.

CUDDY

(really asking)

Why would I want to fight you?

FRANK

It might help.

CUDDY

How?

FRANK

I've found that generally violence helps.

CUDDY

Oh.

FRANK

Generally things start to feel better when it's simple and focused and sort of urgent but we don't have to. It's just if you want.

Cuddy knows this is the only thing Frank can give him, and in that light:

CUDDY

Okay.

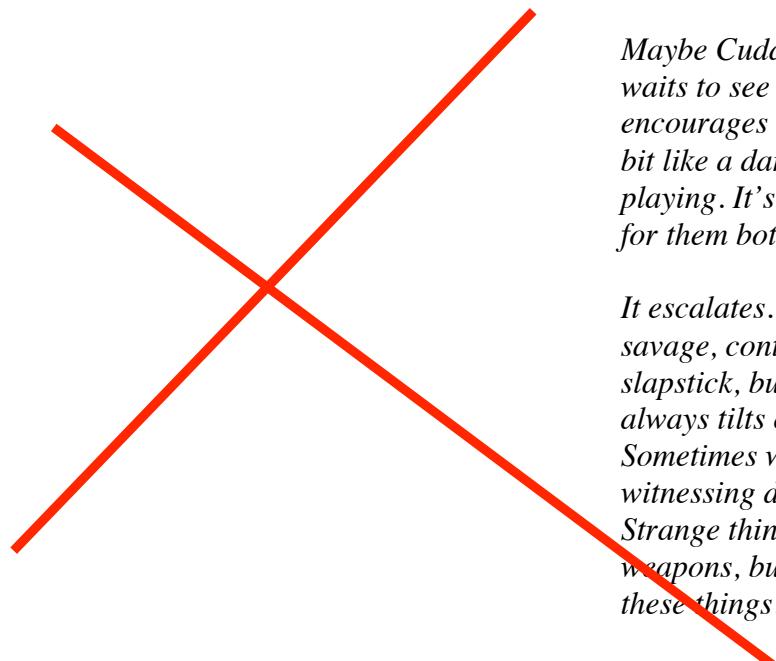
FRANK

Okay?

CUDDY

I'll take it.

They negotiate their way into this fight.



Maybe Cuddy sort of pushes Frank and waits to see how that feels. Maybe Frank encourages Cuddy to push him. It's a little bit like a dance at first, or like two kids playing. It's playful, curious, strange. New for them both.

It escalates. It becomes wild, reckless, savage, continuously inventive. Not slapstick, but with a sense of play that always tilts over the edge back into danger. Sometimes we aren't sure if we're witnessing destruction or a seduction. Strange things come to hand and are used as weapons, but we believe in the danger of these things.