

FRANK AUDITION

SCENE 1

26

CUDDY
Your head is OK? Nothing hurts?

FRANK
No ... why?

CUDDY
Oh... there's just been something going around. That's all.

A weird beat.

FRANK
How's the... morris-dancing?

CUDDY
Great.

FRANK
...Great.

Frank is going to leave – and Cuddy can't help himself, it just bursts out:

CUDDY
You don't really agree with the old man.

FRANK
I like the way your father thinks.

CUDDY
Or do you like the way you *think* he's thinking about you?

FRANK
I'm not sure what you mean.

CUDDY
Well,
I think you *think* he's looking for a son.
But I think you *forgot* that he already *has* one.
Don't you know you're wasting your time?

FRANK
I think you might be asking the wrong question
actually

Oh yeah?

CUDDY
(a little breathless)

Frank steps close to Cuddy. So close. So close that they could kiss. The electricity sparks up. Cuddy is a little light-headed with it, and Frank knows.

FRANK

Like maybe
you should be asking *why* it is
that even though your dad has a son
(technically, you are technically the son)
he needs to find a better one.

CUDDY
(rage and longing)

I'm the heir, Frank.

FRANK

...Are you sure?

(Frank is so close to Cuddy's mouth that Cuddy is a little dazed.)

Sometimes we can get complacent
we can get complacent about what we have
and we just assume we can get what we want
but actually we *can't* anymore, actually
even if we were born in a *castle*
even if we have *hobbies*
like *morris*-dancing, for example
even in those cases sometimes,
deals are made, rules get changed, and
we start to lose things.

Cuddy moves to close the distance between them, to kiss Frank. Frank side-steps him neatly.

FRANK

Hope things work out for you, Cuddy.

Frank saunters out of the banquet hall, like a million bucks. Cuddy stares after him, bruised and seething.

CUDDY

I'm gonna kill him.

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SCENE 2

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Beat.

WINNIFRED

I just feel like
sometimes
I forget what the plan is
and then it feels like
we're just drifting farther and farther away from each other
even though we grew up together and
you married me and
then Sir Arthur invited you here and then
I *came* here for *you*, I became a servant in the castle to be close to *you*
but
now
I'm like, dusting a portrait
and like, serving drinks,
and you're like, sitting there next to him
at the head of the table
laughing at all his jokes
and pretending you don't know me at *all*,
pretending I'm just the girl who's serving you,
and not the girl who you said you wanted to spend your whole *life* with
and
then that starts to feel really really sad.

A beat.

FRANK

You know what the plan is.

WINNIFRED

Do I?

FRANK

Come on, of course you do.
When Sir Arthur makes me his heir, I'll be able to do whatever I want.
You'll be right there with me, we'll run the castle together – eventually.
But right now, I can't rock the boat.
And, you know, part of that is being, uh, friendly to his friends' daughters.

WINNIFRED

...But what if he doesn't make you his heir?

FRANK

(*"you're being naïve again"*)

Baby.

I mean he *has* a son.

WINNIFRED

Cuddy likes *morris* dancing.

FRANK

Okayyyy but someday he's gonna meet a girl, and—

WINNIFRED

Uhh, yeah, no.

FRANK

How do you know?

WINNIFRED

Believe me.

FRANK

A beat, faux-casual:

About those daughters you mentioned...

WINNIFRED

Okay, Winn, look—

FRANK

Those *very* important daughters of a station higher // than—

WINNIFRED

C'mon, stop that Winn. It's just part of the plan.

FRANK

Maybe that's the part where the plan starts to suck.

WINNIFRED

(low and desperate)

We don't need Sir Arthur, we could go back home—

FRANK

And do what?

WINNIFRED

(His vehemence has silenced her – he tries to find a gentler tone with her:)

Sweetheart, we have to ask for more than what we were born with.

FRANK

Why?

WINNIFRED

FRANK

Because if we don't ask for more, we'll end up with less.

WINNIFRED

But right now, I don't even have you.

FRANK

You *have* me, we're just—
ugh, Winn
it's gonna be fine.

With great care:

WINNIFRED

Well
I hope so, Frank, because
here's the complicated thing:
I'm pregnant.

FRANK

...You're what??

WINNIFRED

Sorry – I should say:
We
are pregnant.

FRANK

Since when?

WINNIFRED

I wasn't sure for about a week.
And then I became sure.

FRANK

Oh.
Oh my god.

WINNIFRED

That doesn't sound like a good "oh my god."

FRANK

Oh my god.

WINNIFRED

Right.
 Okay.
 Well
 let me put it this way.
 If your Sir Arthur hooked you up with somebody's rich daughter,
 and you let him,
 and then everybody found out you actually have a *wife*
 and she's having your *kid*,
 I think you might not be as shiny as you are right now, you know?
 You might...tarnish. A little. In the eyes of Sir Arthur.
 So. Let's lock it down, Frank Thorney.

*Something shines in Frank - that cold edge.
 Frank leans in. His aria.*

FRANK
(soft, menacing)

Here's the thing, my love
 maybe I didn't explain this clearly
 so let me try it again:

Sometimes men come along
 born under a special star
 and that's me.
 I've always known it's going to be different for me.

I didn't scrape by for nothing,
 working the land - that shitty rocky soil,
 half the time you can't even get a potato out of it,
 and some winters we get by, but some winters there's just nothing,
 so we pull our belts tight and wait for spring and then spring comes
 but actually there's *still* nothing –

I don't plan to be nothing.

I got by because I could feel what I *could* be
 just under the ribs, waiting to grow,
 waiting for the right soil
 and here it is
 and here I am
 and I am ready to be great.

You too, if you want greatness,
 but maybe not you, maybe you don't
 and that's OK -
 people grow apart - and that's sad, when it happens,

but it does happen.

You're gonna be a great wife, Winn
and I love you to death but
nobody is getting in my way
not even you.

...Frank?

WINNIFRED

*Like a switch being hit, Frank is himself
again, as she knows him.*

FRANK

But I'd rather we did it together.

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SCENE 3

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Why would I throw it away for a maid?

(straight to Winnifred, cold)

Winnifred gets up and walks out of the room.

I've always thought the girl was strange.

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.

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...

FRANK

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.

Yeah?

CUDDY

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 –

I can't.

FRANK

I know.

CUDDY

Your dad, and
everything
pretty much everything
super messy

FRANK

I know that.

CUDDY

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

I'll let you fight me.

FRANK

What?

CUDDY

I'll let you fight me.

FRANK

I don't want to fight you.

CUDDY

If you want
you could just
we could just
fight.

FRANK

Why would I want to fight you?

CUDDY
(really asking)

It might help.

FRANK

How?

CUDDY

I've found that generally
violence
helps.

FRANK

Oh.

CUDDY

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.

FRANK

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

Okay.

CUDDY

Okay?

FRANK

I'll take it.

CUDDY

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.*