

(A stage, in an abandoned theatre. It can be suggested as minimally or elaborately as the designer wishes and/or the architecture of the actual theatre dictates. It should, however, be dimly lit, as if by auxiliary lighting. There emanates from it an atmosphere of dread—there is something very wrong with this place. A young woman enters, nervously looks about. A man follows, and lingers around the periphery of the light.)

ELIZABETH

Dr. Hearn's? Where did you go? I can't see you.

TREVOR

I'm here.

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry. I lost you for a second.

TREVOR

No, you didn't. I've been behind you all the way.

ELIZABETH

Is this where we...?

TREVOR

This is it. But Elizabeth—we're going to have to do something about this 'Dr. Hearn's' business.

ELIZABETH

Oh. What do you...?

TREVOR

Trev. Call me Trev. Please.

ELIZABETH

Oh, my G— Really? I...thought that was only seniors...

TREVOR

No. Not just seniors, though most of them *are* seniors, as it turns out. But it's not just seniors. Actors. Anyone who is an Actor. Really...and truly...an Actor. With a capital A. It seems a little...elitist, I guess—I know some of the students joke about it—but I like to...I think it's right to keep a little distance, when it comes to the dabblers. You know what I mean?

ELIZABETH

Dab—? No.

TREVOR

The cruise-ship dancers. The theme-park singers. I'm not going to name names, so you can forget about that, but I bet you know who I'm talking about. These people will take whatever technical tricks they like from me and the other faculty, and then they'll move on to Disney or Six Flags and none of us will even remember they were here. But once you show me you're an Actor, there shouldn't be any distance—there *can't* be any distance—at all. No secrets. No me-faculty/you-student bullshit. Acting is all about open lines of communication, isn't it? Between you and the other Actors, you and the audience, you and your mentor. Right? So let's not start our process with a lot of handicaps in the way.

ELIZABETH

Oh...sure. Absolutely. I just... Do you really think I could be an...Actor? With a capital A?

TREVOR

You don't even have to ask me—you know it's true. You know it in your heart. You've always known it. Haven't you?

ELIZABETH

Yes. Yes, I have. But it's so hard to be sure, and my father,...he's...he...

TREVOR

He's what?

ELIZABETH

I don't know.

TREVOR

Well, we should probably be nice to the parents of the world. It's got to be a terrifying realization, you know? That they have *nothing*, whatsoever, to do with who or what you become.

ELIZABETH

Every time he visits me—my...father—he leaves one of those little flyers about the B.A. in Hotel Management. And I've thought about it, believe me, it's just...that I somehow can't...

TREVOR

Settle.

ELIZABETH

Yes!

TREVOR

For the safe, dull, reliable thing. Of course you can't. It's our curse. I sometimes compare it to hang-gliding in a lightning storm. We're all standing on the edge of that cliff, and most people—the *vast* majority—would treasure the feel of the solid rock beneath their feet. Then there's us—we can't stop looking at the electricity crackling inside the cloud banks, can't stop smelling the ozone, feeling the wind whipping at us. We're always looking out there, where the danger and the glory are, and sooner or later we know we have to make that jump.

ELIZABETH

Wow.

TREVOR

I know, pretty over the top. But I have a hard time not being romantic about it.

ELIZABETH

Um, Dr....Trev?

TREVOR

Dr. Trev. I think I like that.

ELIZABETH

I didn't think you'd ever...when did you see me act?

TREVOR

(Dismissively)

The thing last Spring...the student thing...

ELIZABETH

The Futurist Cabaret? But that was such a small...

TREVOR

Elizabeth. I don't really need to see you act. I've seen you around. The office. The green room. You caught my eye immediately. I recognized the aura.

ELIZABETH

Aura?

TREVOR

Mmm-hmm. I've been doing this a long time. And I guess I flatter myself enough to think I've developed an instinct. I can pretty much walk into a room, watch people interact for a moment and then point to this person, that person, and say: Actor, Actor, stage manager...*hotel* manager. And you know what, Elizabeth? In over twenty years, I've never been wrong. Not once.

ELIZABETH

Really?

TREVOR

Really. So you can take my word for it: you're going to make it, *if* you decide you want it badly enough. If you truly make that leap. You've got that capital-A Actor aura. And speaking frankly, your beauty won't hurt you, either.

(She looks at him.)

I'm just saying. Open lines of communication—I wouldn't be honest if I avoided that fact, would I? It's a shallow business, and talent isn't the only thing that matters. We all know that. You all right?

ELIZABETH

Sure.

(He tilts his head, gives her a searching look.)

TREVOR

Then what is it? Come on, Elizabeth. Honesty has to go both ways.

ELIZABETH

It's just...why do we have to do this here? In this place?

TREVOR

(Laughs a little)

Ah, okay. My bad. I taught so many classes in here at one time, I tend to forget how...anxious it can make a person feel. It's called Haviland Hall—you probably know that. The old theatre. I agree, it's pretty...‘atmospheric’ in here. It's a condemned building, you know. *Officially*. But we're unofficial, so it's okay.

ELIZABETH

We are?

TREVOR

The Actors with a capital A. Maybe the rules don't apply so much to us.

(Pause)

ELIZABETH

Is it...safe?

TREVOR

Depends on what you mean. The stage isn't going anywhere. Pine boards over concrete. They took out all the battens, so there's nothing that can fall on us. They're keeping the

auxiliary lighting going, God knows why, so we can kind of see our way around. Still, security would haul our asses out of here if they knew. They were supposed to tear it down two years ago, but the art department had some crazy notion they were going to refurbish and take it over. They even moved the Chair's office over here for a little while, until they realized they couldn't find a secretary willing to stay here by herself. Not even for a moment.

ELIZABETH

Why...wouldn't they stay?

TREVOR

I never got the details, but...there's a feeling here. I can't really describe it, but you're feeling it now, aren't you?

(Pause. She's unsure of what to say.)

Most theatres are haunted. It's just the way it is. I guarantee you, give our shiny new performing arts center a few more years and we'll have ghosts, too. But this place—with this kind of history—it's the most haunted place I've ever been in. In fact, *I* believe—and I've spent more man-hours in here than anyone else—I believe Haviland Hall is more than haunted. I believe it's *infested*.

ELIZABETH

So why are we here?

(She realizes she's nearly barked the question at him, and immediately becomes confused and contrite.)

I mean...

TREVOR

It was your idea, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

What?

TREVOR

Think back. What did you say to me, when I told you I was going to help you with your monologue?

ELIZABETH

I said... 'Thank you?'

TREVOR

After that.

ELIZABETH

I said... Oh! I remember. I said that I'd heard you worked magic with audition pieces...

TREVOR

Exactly. And when you said that, you gave me an idea, the perfect idea for working on this piece. We are going to perform magic tonight, Elizabeth. Literally and figuratively, and when we are done, you are going to have a Lady Macbeth unlike any the world has seen. I promise.

ELIZABETH

Oh, my God. That's...great. I've been so worried. You know about the unified auditions coming up in May—of course you do—and, I don't know, I've convinced myself I have a chance, if I could just...nail something classical. Then maybe I could convince my father that... Oh my God, I'm babbling, I'm just...thank you. Thank you....Trev.

(He smiles, then abruptly claps his hands.)

TREVOR

Up and at 'em. Let's go. Time to show me what you have.

(She nods, then stands and rubs her hands on her pant legs. Does a few breathing exercises, perhaps, or shakes the tension out of her hands.)

ELIZABETH

Where would you like me to do it? Right here?

(He says nothing.)

Okay.

The raven himself is hoarse
 That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
 Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
 And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
 Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood;
 Stop up the access and passage to remorse.
 Come to my woman's breasts and take my milk for gall,
 You murdering ministers. Come, thick night,
 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
 That my knife sees not the wound it makes,
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
 To cry 'Hold, hold!'

(It is a competent performance, technically, but kind of mannered. When she finishes, he regards her in silence for an uncomfortably long time, chewing on a cuticle or something.)

How...how did you like it?

TREVOR

The question is—how did *you* like it?

ELIZABETH

I don't know.

TREVOR

You don't *know*? I think you do.

ELIZABETH

I...feel like there's...something missing.

TREVOR

Something missing? Good. Good perception. There *is* something missing. A character. Connection to the character. Connection to the words. And most of all, it's missing any trace of action. It's inert. An inert little piece of theatricality that isn't going to get you one callback at unifiends.

(Registers her reaction.)

Hey. You came out here to make this piece better, right? Or did you just come to hear: "Brilliant, Elizabeth! Beyond perfection!"? If you want that, I could send you to Dr. McCombs.

ELIZABETH

No! I didn't want to hear that. I...just thought there was *something* worthwhile there.

TREVOR

Well, the good news is we can fix it. Right now. Tonight. Give you a piece that'll grab them by their throats. That'll have them thumbing through their audition sheets saying "Elizabeth...who?" "Do you have this one? Who *is* she?"

(She laughs.)

ELIZABETH

Really?

TREVOR

The key is in the action. Always the action. Let me ask you something. What are you doing? In this soliloquy?

ELIZABETH

Well, she's...

TREVOR

“*She's...?*”

ELIZABETH

Um, um...

TREVOR

First-person, Elizabeth! Talk about her in the first person! You *are* Lady Macbeth! Didn't you—? Who did you take Basics of Performance with? Never mind, I don't want to know. But please—first person. All right? Now what are you doing in this soliloquy?

ELIZABETH

Well, I guess *I'm...*conjuring spirits?

TREVOR

Correct. Absolutely. Why are you conjuring spirits?

ELIZABETH

To...help me? To help me kill the King?

TREVOR

Yes! Yes! Excellent! To help you! Now why do you need help?

ELIZABETH

Because...it's going to be really hard, but I feel I have to do it.

TREVOR

Yes! And...?

ELIZABETH

I'm too weak to do it by myself!

TREVOR

Yes! Yes! Hallelujah! ‘And there came a great thunder from the mountains and the air was filled with rejoicing and the banging of gongs!’ You knew it! You knew it all along—so why the hell weren't you playing it?

ELIZABETH

I don't know.

TREVOR

I'll tell you why you weren't playing it: because it's easier to play some generic 'evil.' You were falling right into the trap. The same fucking trap they all fall into. Playing Lady Macbeth like you're the Saturday afternoon creature feature, and never stopping to think once that she is invoking these spirits because...she...*needs* them. Because she is weak. She is not Vincent Price. She is not...Elvira, Mistress of the Dark. She is not a *super-villain*. She is a woman. A woman who is about to kill the most powerful man in her universe. And she needs help. So let's try it again, and this time, for the love of God, when you ask for help from the spirits, could you please try actually meaning it!

ELIZABETH

Okay.

(She goes through a quick warm-up, this time with a kind of exhilarated determination, like a runner warming up for an Olympic sprint.)

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty! Make thick...

(She trails off, seeing the expression on his face.)

Was that better?

TREVOR

Oh, yes. It's better. Definitely better. But it's not better enough. The artistic directors of The Shakespeare Ensemble and Northeast Players Theatre are both good friends of mine. I want to be able to write them a letter telling them to keep their eyes open for you—would you like me to be able do that for you?

ELIZABETH

Yes! Oh my God, yes! You...could do that?

TREVOR

Of course I could. But if, and only if, I'm convinced that your work in this audition is going to justify it. My word has opened a lot of doors for students over the years. I want it to continue to open doors, which means it has to continue to mean something. And let me tell you something about these people—they can sniff out “Shakespearisms” at five miles away. You know what I mean by that? Shakespearisms? The fake English accent—“Suh;” “My lawd.” Vowels **ROUNDED** to the point of absurdity. Statuesque eighteenth-century poses.

(He strikes one.)

“I am a *king*.”

(Strikes another.)

“I am *evil*.” You see?

ELIZABETH

Am I doing that?

TREVOR

A little. Of course I'm exaggerating, a *lot*, but there's a residue there. It's really just a thin layer of dishonesty you're wearing, but to The Shakespeare Ensemble it'll read like a Halloween costume. I want you out of that costume.

(Pause)

I want to...try something with you. If you agree. A way of releasing you from the hold these damn Shakespearean poses have on us. These affectations.

ELIZABETH

What...do you want me to do?

TREVOR

A little exercise I use in Advanced Styles. For forging true connections. You say you're conjuring spirits. Right now, we're surrounded by them. So why not conjure one? *Actually* conjure one. Using your soliloquy.

ELIZABETH

(Laughing nervously, not sure if he's joking)

Are you sure that's a good idea?

(He doesn't answer. Pause.)

I mean, I know this sounds...It doesn't really make sense, but I never believed in ghosts, really, but at the same time I just don't think we ought to mess with things like that. My sister and her friends were really into the Ouija board for a while—my father got so angry. I wouldn't touch that thing...

TREVOR

Too dangerous?

ELIZABETH

Yes! Though I don't really know what I mean by that...

TREVOR

Elizabeth, think. Think of what you've already done. The choices you've already made. I mean, first, I bet all your friends are scared off by well-known stuff, right? Combing the canon for any obscure crap they can find: the Jailer's Daughter in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, Dionyza in *Pericles*. And here you are, hanging it all out there with fucking Lady Macbeth. And that's another thing: nine-tenths of your classmates wouldn't even dare *think* the name "Macbeth" when they're preparing for a major audition, but here you are, choosing it for your fucking audition speech. Saying the name over and over again. In a theatre. And now in *this* theatre! That is pure *balls*, Elizabeth! I can't tell you how impressed I am with that.

ELIZABETH

Thank you. I never really put much stock in that superstition...

TREVOR

Oh well, let's not be stupid about it. I never said you shouldn't put stock in it. It's a serious thing. Most theatre people believe there's something to it. I mean, think of all the horrible things that have happened during productions. Lighting instruments falling and killing actors. Set pieces collapsing. Heart attacks onstage. It's a nasty little history this play has, and that's why that little "superstition" exists. *Accepting* the reality of it, and still going on, challenging the theatre gods: *that's* bravery. That way glory lies.

(Pause)

Tell you what. I have a particular spirit in mind. Let me tell you about her, and then you can decide, okay?

(After a moment, Elizabeth nods.)

Good. A lot to choose from in here. But there's one that...well, she died fairly recently, in the '60s, and we know her name, which should make the conjuring easier. Have you ever heard of Starla Rogers?

ELIZABETH

(Thinks)

Yes. I do remember the name. It was like my first day here, and one of the seniors told me...something.

TREVOR

Yeah, you're lucky. Last year's seniors are the last generation to use this place, the last people who really know the stories. But for them it's just hearsay, mostly. I didn't experience the story directly, either, of course. I didn't start here until a good ten or twelve years later, but I worked with people who knew Starla. You want to hear the story? The *real* story?

ELIZABETH

(Looks around a little nervously)

Okay.

TREVOR

Good for you. Let's tell it.

(He walks around the stage, letting suspense build before he begins.)

Starla Rogers came here in '66, I think. She was like a lot of our majors. Stars in her eyes. Absolutely convinced she was destined for immortality—and in a way, I guess she was right. She was pretty. Talented, I hear. And she had that *name*. How could you be named Starla all your life and not grow up to be a star, right? Preordained.

There were some problems, though. Some cracks in the picture. She was...neurotic—well, of course she was, but even more neurotic than the usual theatre person. A little unstable. A little...off. She had a lot of acquaintances, apparently—party-pals—but no real friends. No one wanted to get too close. She was a cutter. A self-mutilator. You know—the disorder where a girl will obsessively make little cuts in her flesh, let the blood out...

ELIZABETH

(Quietly)

I know what a cutter is.

TREVOR

Yes, of course. Pretty common, now. The anorexia of the twenty-first century. But back then nobody had a name for it. It was so unusual, in fact, that it's mostly in hindsight we know what was wrong with her.

But that wasn't the only problem. You see, Starla had a twin. Yes. Kimberly. You hear a lot about simpatico between twins, right? They can read each others minds, finish each others sentences, all that shit. Well, these two were a little more complicated than that. Powerful love/hate stuff going on. And they were really different in most ways. Kim had a nice, boring name. Low-key girl. Clearly *not* the one chosen by Mom for stardom. She came here as a music major, in fact. Woodwinds. So no conflict, right? They each had their separate pathways, and never the twain shall meet. Except, what do you know, the twain *did* meet. Someone talked sister Kim into auditioning, and it turned out that she was every bit as talented an actor as Starla. Just as pretty, too—she was an identical twin—and she was more pleasant to work with. So, in their junior year, she started getting roles, major roles. Roles that should have been Starla's.

Christmas break of that year, they went away on a ski vacation in Aspen. Both of them were expert skiers, so nobody thought anything about it when Starla challenged Kim to join her on a double-black-diamond slope, one of those narrow little trails through the woods, with moguls everywhere and drops like cliff-faces. But Starla was the only one who made it to the bottom. Crying hysterically, something about Kim having an

accident. When the ski patrol got up there, they found her at the base of a tree, her skull shattered.

(Elizabeth gasps.)

Yes. Awful. Starla was inconsolable. Or at least she appeared to be. She was an actor, after all.

ELIZABETH

You mean people thought she...?

TREVOR

(Shrugging)

Nothing was ever proven, but everyone wondered. The way the two of them were speeding down that hill, it wouldn't have taken anything more than a nudge. And a lot of people thought that just maybe, Starla would have been capable of a nudge.

Anyway, after that, she really began to fall apart. She insisted on coming back for school in the spring, even though everyone told her to take some time. She said she needed to work, and she didn't want to miss out on a semester's worth of roles. Well, as that semester went on she got stranger and stranger. The cutting got so bad that even the clueless '60s folk were asking questions about the scars on her forearms. She did have a cat, so she could explain away some of it that way. She said she was scared to be alone in her apartment, so she started sleeping in here. Yes. She'd confided in another actor, apparently—and this is where things do reach into the realm of hearsay—that she thought her sister was in her bathroom at night. That she saw her in her mirror once. That the cat would constantly hiss at something in there. Anyway, like I said, I'm not sure about any of that. But it's a fact that she began to live in here more and more. Sleeping in the green room, eating most of her meals out of the microwave.

Well, she didn't get cast in any of the shows that semester. Everyone was leery of her. But of course that just made her worse. She began ranting about favoritism, and spending hour after hour in here working on audition pieces, and vowing she was going to come back here in a few years as a Hollywood star and spit in everyone's faces.

She stopped...bathing regularly. Stopped making any effort to hide the cuts on her arms and legs. There was talk of having her committed, but amazingly, still no one quite dared take the initiative. I think everyone was a little afraid of her. Students *and* faculty.

One night, a posse of concerned students finally worked up the nerve to confront her. A 1960s "intervention," if you will, though no one called it that. They went to her apartment, and no one answered. And there was this foul stench coming from under the door, and one of the boys in the group—a brave one—decided to kick in the door. There they found the poor cat, dead on the living room rug. Its skull was bashed in.

Yes. So they got a couple campus security guys and hurried over here. The first thing they saw was a trail of blood leading out of the women's bathroom. Splotches here, drips there, bloody footprints here and there. The trail led through the lobby, down one aisle and right down onto this stage.

(Pause. She is too horrified to speak.)

It was suicide. Everyone knows that. Open and shut case. What not everyone knows is *how* she killed herself.

ELIZABETH

I heard she...slit her wrists.

TREVOR

Yes, that's the official version. The version released to the media. Her father was a trustee, and he had a lot of money to spread around. The truth was a lot more...grotesque. Do you want to hear?

ELIZABETH

I'm...not sure.

TREVOR

She'd been breaking light bulbs. The janitors had been complaining about it, finding the jagged bases everywhere, little shards all over the floor. It turns out, she'd been using that glass, that razor-thin glass, to slice her skin. Well, that night...she actually smashed one of the fluorescent bulbs in the women's room. Pounded the glass into little flakes, made a whole pile of the stuff, and...devoured it.

(She stands up and recoils from him, hand clasped over her mouth as if to hold back vomit.)

ELIZABETH

Oh God! Oh God! How...horrible! Why did you tell me that story?! Why did you...? I don't want to hear that!

TREVOR

I know, I know. It *is* horrible. That's the *point*.

ELIZABETH

I'm going back. I want to go back!

TREVOR

Fine. You do that. Go back! Jesus Christ! Think about what role you are presuming to play here. *Lady Macbeth*. Not Rebecca of Fucking Sunnybrook Farm. Lady Macbeth. And what is it that Lady Macbeth is preparing to *do*?

ELIZABETH

We already said.

TREVOR

Well, say it again! I want to hear you say it.

ELIZABETH

Kill the King.

TREVOR

Yes. That's right. Kill the King. "Kill the King." Sounds all generic and cozy and suburban white-girl when you say it, but have you really thought about what that means? You're not going to "kill" him—you're going *slaughter* him. And all his attendants. Plunge a knife into them while they're sleeping. Slice tendons. Punch through the muscles. Sever arteries while they scream and thrash. That's you're supposed to be preparing to do, and you don't even dare conduct a little séance. Tell me, what is it that makes you think you're worthy to play *her*?

(Pause)

Elizabeth. This is it. Your moment. Your moment on the cliff. That pivotal, crucial, life-changing moment that every great Actor faces. Ready to dive out into the storm. Soar in the wind and the lightning. Or not.

(Pause)

Tell you what, forget it. Why don't you go talk to Dr. McCombs—the two of you can find a nice little Neil Simon piece together. Or better yet, I can call your father—tell him to go get that little hotel management flyer...

(She bursts into tears, racking, gasping sobs that convulse her body. He runs to her, startled.)

TREVOR

Listen. Elizabeth, Elizabeth, I'm sorry. I didn't mean that. I'm so sorry. I...just want this so badly for you, I... I didn't mean to hurt you. Please forgive me.

ELIZABETH

(Softly)

I'll do it.

TREVOR

Oh. Oh, I don't know...

ELIZABETH

I said I'll do it.

(Pause. He smiles)

TREVOR

All right, then. If you're sure. Just understand, if you're going to do this, I want all of you. I want all of you right here. No preconceptions. You're going to have to get rid of everything you've worked on up until now. All right? I don't want you in medieval Scotland, I want you right here. You understand? Right now. You are not the wife of a Scottish lord, you are Elizabeth, and you're standing on a stage in Haviland Hall. All right?

ELIZABETH

(Shaking out her hands)

All right.

TREVOR

Good. Now—I want you to think of something. You: Elizabeth. It has to be something that you desperately want to do—but something you're afraid of. Understand? Something Elizabeth must do. But something Elizabeth cannot do, because she is too weak. Understand me?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

TREVOR

Keep it high-stakes. *High stakes*. It *must* be done.

(Slight pause. He watches her intently.)

Have something?

ELIZABETH

I'm not...sure.

TREVOR

Well, *be* sure. It doesn't have to be pretty, or...morally correct. In fact, better if it isn't. But it has to be something you are screaming to do. Do you understand?

(She nods. There are tears in her eyes.)

ELIZABETH

Okay.

TREVOR

I mean, you can't be timid when...

ELIZABETH

Okay.

(Slight pause)

TREVOR

Okay. I want you to ask for help now. Help accomplishing this impossible goal. I want you to ask...Starla.

ELIZABETH

Oh God.

TREVOR

I know. It's scary. But you're not alone in this. You're not jumping off that cliff by yourself, all right? I'm going to be up here with you. Close. If you start to get too scared, then simply reach for me, all right? And I'll give you my strength. You'll get through it.

(She nods.)

You are wonderful. All right, get back in that mindset. Think of this thing you need, and when you're ready, use these incredible words that the greatest playwright who ever lived has given you. Use them to call Starla here. To us. Take it from 'Come, you spirits...'

She pauses for as long as the actor needs, then lifts her head and launches into it. The difference is fairly astounding. All affectation is gone from it: it's gritty and real. If she needs to sacrifice a little of the poetry, that's all right. One problem, though: as she progresses through it, it is clear that she is becoming more frightened.)

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood;
Stop...up the...

TREVOR

'...access...'

ELIZABETH

...access and passage to remorse.
Come to my...my woman's...

TREVOR

'...breasts...' Take my strength.

ELIZABETH

...breasts...

(She reaches a hand out to Trevor, who responds by moving in closer and preparing to embrace her. The lights flicker and die. She screams.)

TREVOR

Elizabeth! Elizabeth! It's all right! I'm here! Take my strength.

(The lights flicker back on. She is in his arms, crying and shaking. He strokes her hair, savoring the contact.)

You're doing it. God bless you, you're doing it! She wants to come through. To help you.

ELIZABETH

Was that...her?

TREVOR

I think so. Yes, I think it was. And the soliloquy. The soliloquy, Elizabeth! It was... breathtaking!

(He smells her hair, his eyes closed, and prepares to kiss her on the temple. She seems to awaken from her daze, pulling away from him and looking at him. He pulls away, too.)

Now finish it.

ELIZABETH

What?

TREVOR

You're not one of those freshmen from Basics of Performance. You don't stop just because something *real* happens. That's when an Actor leaps forward, right into the middle of the real. You saw those lights, Elizabeth! If that was her, then you did that with your *acting*! Your *acting*, Elizabeth! It doesn't get any more real than that!

This is your moment. Get back up. Finish the conjuring. Bring her here. Then you can have a nice, well-earned drink, and tomorrow I can write my letter to the Shakespeare Ensemble telling them I just saw the best fucking Lady Macbeth of my life. Go on.

(She gets up, uncertainly.)

ELIZABETH

I don't know if I can do it again.

TREVOR

Then don't do it *again*. Do it better. Raise the stakes even higher, fucking *beg* her for your help. Take it from "Come, you spirits." And don't stop! If something real happens, you fucking embrace it! Be an Actor! Now, go!

ELIZABETH

Come, you spirits
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
 And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
 Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood;
 Stop up the access and passage to remorse.
 Come to my woman's breasts and take my milk for gall,
 You murdering ministers. Come, thick night,
 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
 That my knife sees not the wound it makes,
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
 To cry 'Hold, hold!'

(The lights flicker again a few times toward the end, and there is the sound of glass breaking somewhere in the building, but this time the occurrences energize her. When the lights come back to normal, they are not quite normal. Something about the light has changed. The soliloquy is brilliant. Utterly transformed. Finishing it, she pants, astonished at the experience.)

Oh, my God. Oh, my God. That was...

TREVOR

That was...your moment. Elizabeth's moment. I feel...honored to be here to see it.

(He walks around the stage, eyes half-closed.)

She's here, you know. Can you feel it?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

(Pause)

TREVOR

(Sitting down near her)

That thing you needed help with—is she going to help you?

ELIZABETH

I don't know.

(Pause)

Yes.

TREVOR

Excellent. Do you want to...do you feel comfortable telling me what it is?

ELIZABETH

You said...it was a secret.

TREVOR

Absolutely. Mum's the word. That's great. It belongs just to you. That's the way it should be.

ELIZABETH

Glass breaking... I heard glass breaking.

TREVOR

Hmm. Could have been the pipes. Old building.

ELIZABETH

No. It was a light-bulb breaking somewhere. Backstage, I think.

TREVOR

Light bu...of course. Of course that's what it was. A light-bulb. That's just how she'd do it. Announce her arrival.

(He scoots in closer to her.)

Don't be scared. You have my strength, too.

ELIZABETH

I'm not scared.

TREVOR

Good.

(He places an arm around her. She stares straight ahead.)

Elizabeth. May I tell you just how *proud* I am of you tonight. You did it. You did it, girlfriend.

(Pause)

You are special. A very special girl.

(He kisses her on the cheek, then slides his lips down to kiss her neck. The lights die. There is a crack, then the tinkling of breaking glass.)

Whoa!

(When the lights come back, he is standing several feet from her, looking around wildly.)

What the fuck was that?

ELIZABETH

Glass.

TREVOR

No. I don't think that's what it was.

ELIZABETH

Yes.

(Pause)

TREVOR

Listen, Elizabeth. In the interest of the exercise—in the interest of helping you with your audition—I may have misrepresented some things. Presented some things as fact that are...I guess more along the lines of conjecture, all right?

ELIZABETH

No. It's right. Most of it.

(Slight pause)

TREVOR

Well, for instance, that idea that she killed her twin may belong more in the category of old-wives tale...

ELIZABETH

She killed her.

TREVOR

She did?

ELIZABETH

Just what you said. A nudge. With her hip. She felt really bad about it, though.

TREVOR

Who was this senior?

(Elizabeth says nothing, continues to stare in front of her. Pause)

Listen. That drink we were talking about.

ELIZABETH

I didn't...talk about it.

TREVOR

Right. I just meant...I could really use it about now.

ELIZABETH

(Staring off. Dazedly.)

Use it. Use...it.

TREVOR

Elizabeth. What are you thinking right now? What are you feeling?

(He slides in next to her)

I'll understand. Better than anybody. Share it with me.

(She says nothing. He takes her hands in his, then begins kissing one of them.)

ELIZABETH

(Without looking at him)

Actresses are sluts.

TREVOR

What?

ELIZABETH

Actresses are sluts.

TREVOR

That's a stupid word, Elizabeth. Meaningless. Invented by stupid, shallow men afraid of female desire. It has no place in an Actor's vocabulary. No place here...tonight.

(He tries to resume kissing her.)

ELIZABETH

That's what he told her. Every time he took her hands, put them on him. Made her...do the things he wanted. Licked her body.

TREVOR

Who?

ELIZABETH

He wouldn't touch Kimmie. She was the perfect one. Like a statue. A marble statue. Even when she pretended she was an actress, started stealing...Starla's roles. Papa still wouldn't touch her. Only the slut.

(He backs away, staring at her)

TREVOR

I've never heard this part.

ELIZABETH

He could always tell them apart. No matter what they wore. He could...smell her. I think.

TREVOR

How do you know all this?

ELIZABETH

When her dreams were gone, that was all she had left...to be. A slut. So she...

(She smiles, and pantomimes shoveling something into her mouth with both hands.)

TREVOR

Um, Elizabeth...

ELIZABETH

But she killed the wrong...people. She was so weak, so sad...

TREVOR

All right. Okay.

ELIZABETH

So sad...

TREVOR

Okay, okay, now I get it.

(He applauds)

Very funny. And utterly brilliant, I might add. A little joke on the theatre professor. Though I'm still trying to figure out how you did it. Let's see, you talked to the other students, you guessed what direction I might go with your monologue, and you came in all prepared with this...Starla stuff. Utterly amazing. You have the mind of a chess master...

ELIZABETH

She wasn't strong enough to do...what she needed to do...

TREVOR

If anything, I'm even more impressed.

ELIZABETH

So sad... So weak...

(He moves toward her)

TREVOR

Elizabeth. All right. You got me, all right?

(He turns, slowly, something that might be a smile on her face)

ELIZABETH

Got you.

TREVOR

(Fairly sagging in relief)

Yes. You got me. God. I can barely fathom how you set this up, but...I am just so fucking impressed.

(He starts to move in, then thinks of something.)

We are alone, aren't we? You don't have a confederate at the circuit box, do you?
Turning the lights on and off?

ELIZABETH

Alone. All alone.

TREVOR

Yes. We are. More alone than we care to admit sometimes, I think.

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry.

TREVOR

You know what? Don't be. I deserved this. I'll be the first to admit it. I can be...very strict. Pompous, even. Maybe. But...

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry.

(He begins the physical seduction anew, perhaps rubbing her back, stroking her hair, etc., preparing to kiss her.)

TREVOR

I told you, there's nothing to be sorry about. We're friends, Elizabeth. Soulmates, out in that storm together.

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry...for not using first person.

TREVOR

Hey. Ancient history.

ELIZABETH

I...

TREVOR

An Actor learns to live in the present.

ELIZABETH

I...

TREVOR

In the Now.

ELIZABETH

I...

(Each "I" has grown stronger, as if she's increasingly enjoying the taste of the word. He doesn't notice. He rubs her midriff, then starts to slide his hands up to her breasts)

TREVOR

What are you going to do Now?

ELIZABETH

I will...

(The lights die. Loud crash of breaking glass. Frightened exclamations from Trevor.)

I will...

TREVOR

Elizabeth! Where are you?

ELIZABETH

I will...

TREVOR

Where are you?

(He flicks on a lighter. He is crouched on the stage. And she is directly behind him. She opens her mouth, and blood bubbles over her lower lip and on to her chin, possibly with flecks of something shiny visible in the smear of red.)

ELIZABETH

...take your strength.

(She hugs him from behind, arms encircling him in an iron grip. He screams and the lighter goes out. His screams grow ghastlier in the darkness and then abruptly cut out.)

FINIS