

WYTCH - (EXCERPTS)SCENE 2: PENDLE VILLAGE

*Bess Southernns (aka **DEMDIKE**), late 50's, enters. She is accompanied by her daughter **Elizabeth**, 30's, a fiesta and strong woman with a facial disfigurement and fiery temper. With them is Elizabeth's daughter **Jennet**, a ragged and surly young girl of 9 years.*

DEMDIKE

(To Elizabeth)

Go back to Richard Baldwin. Take the child. Perhaps once he sees how scrawny she is he will take pity? Our Jennet is his after all!

ELIZABETH

I would rather eat my own shit than cower before that arseworm.

DEMDIKE

He took his pleasure of you and would have now't more to contribute. It's only right, it's the least he can do.

ALICE NUTTER, a good-natured noblewoman in her 30s, approaches

ALICE

Good day, Mother Demdike! How do you fare?

DEMDIKE

Eyesight almost gone, but I can tell by the tone you are one Mistress Alice.

ALICE

Then your ears haven't failed you, at least!
What cheer, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH begrudgingly nods her head

ALICE (cont'd)

(To Jennet)

And who is this?

ELIZABETH

My daughter.

(Whispering)

Say hello - and mind your manners for God's sake.

She pushes her forward

JENNET

I am Jennet, and I am nine.

ALICE

It's a pleasure to meet you, Jennet.

ELIZABETH pulls JENNET back to her, but she wriggles out of her grip and goes right up to Alice

JENNET

You are the widow who lives in that big house in Roughlee.

ALICE

I am, yes.

JENNET

How did your husband die?

ELIZABETH

Jennet!

DEMDIKE

Christ's wounds, child!

ALICE

No, that's alright.

(To Jennet)

Robert got very sick, very quickly. Your Grandmother aided him for almost a year. Her tinctures of herbs kept him alive long enough to see our son Miles turn ten years. For that, I am forever indebted to your family.

JENNET

Mam's husband died too, before I was born! He wasn't my Pa, though - but that's a secret.

RICHARD BALDWIN walks behind Elizabeth and Demdike. As he passes he shouts:

RICHARD BALDWIN

Did you not hear me? I said away, whores and witches! I'll burn one of you and hang the other!

ELIZABETH

I care not for thee; hang thyself!

Alice stifles a smirk. Jennet tugs on her sleeve

JENNET (CONT'D)

Mam's husband died too...

ALICE

(Looking at Elizabeth)

Then that's something we have in common. Friendships have been forged over less. Perhaps we will be friends?

ELIZABETH

I don't keep friends.

ALICE

I see.

JENNET

You see that old woman over there? The one who clicks when she talks? Her name is Old Chattox, and she cursed him! That's how he died!

ELIZABETH

(Grabbing her and pulling her back)

Jennet!

DEMDIKE

Lord, will this child forever run her mouth?!

ELIZABETH

Forgive her, she has a bold tongue.

ALICE

You don't have to...-

ELIZABETH

(To Jennet and Demdike)

Come now. Let's find your brother.

She takes DEMDIKE's arm and walks away, pushing JENNET ahead of her

DEMDIKE

Good day to you.

ALICE nods

JENNET

(As she walks)

Mam, look! Alizon's talking to that boy again!

ELIZABETH

Leave them be!

(Aside)

Wretched child...

MATTHEW, 18, is talking with Elizabeth's daughter ALIZON, an incredibly beautiful young girl of 16. He is trying to keep things formal

MATTHEW

Your Grandmother is coming to look at our cows after noon. Will you be helping her?

ALIZON

I expect so. She can't walk far without my arm to lean on. What's wrong with the cows?

MATTHEW

Sick. The Drover said they were stark mad yesterday, and now the milk has turn't blue.

(Teasing)

Pa says it's the Devil's work... Witchcraft!

He makes ALIZON jump and she laughs

BESS HOLDEN

Matty, come help me carry these oats.

Matthew is startled, and looks guilty

MATTHEW

Coming, Mam!

(To Alizon)

You promise you'll come see the cows?

ALIZON

Upon my word.

MATTHEW

Until this aft, then?

ALIZON

Until this aft.

He crosses over to his mother

BESS HOLDEN

(Under her breath)

I thought I told you to keep your distance from that girl?

*Alizon's 17-year-old Down Syndrome brother **JAMES** approaches, holding a fragile baby bird. As he passes people, they avoid him and keep away*

JAMES

Alizon, look what I found!

ALIZON

Have some care, James! What if it pecks you!?

JAMES

It won't! He trusts me.

ALIZON

Where did you find it?

JAMES

(Pointing to a tree)

There.

ALIZON

Poor thing looks half dead. Maybe we should snap its neck and be done with it.

JAMES

No!

ALIZON

We could bury it back at Malkin, next to our old cat?

JAMES

But I can make it better.

ELIZABETH, DEMDIKE and JENNET approach

ELIZABETH

There you are James! Let us be off. We've a busy day ahead. What's that? What've you got?

JENNET

It's a bird!

ELIZABETH

A fledgling crow...

JAMES

It's hurt! I'm going to help him.

JENNET

How do you know it's a 'him'?

ALIZON *'shhh's her*

ELIZABETH

This creature is beyond hope. Let us leave it here?

DEMDIKE

Let him care for the bird, Elizabeth. It won't do any harm for the boy to have something to do.

JAMES

I'll call it 'Dandy'

ELIZABETH

(Affectionately)

My soft; simple-minded son.

(To Jennet)

Jennet, leave it alone!

BLACKOUT.

EXCERPT 2

SCENE 4: PENDLE FOREST AT DUSK

*The sounds of the forest can be heard.
A small fire is started.*

*It is Alizon in the forest on her own,
shivering in her nightgown and shawl.
Hair wild. Getting anxious, waiting for
someone. She hears whispers. A build in
the atmosphere... something is going to
happen...*

Katherine and Isabel arrive

ALIZON

Lord above, you gave me a fright!

KATHERINE

'Twas Isabel's fault. Dilly-dallying dreaming of the wedding night!

ISABEL
(Embarrassed)

I was not!

KATHERINE opens up a flask of fruit wine. ALIZON produces a pipe stuffed with herbs and mushrooms.

ALIZON
(Holding up the pipe)

From Demdike.

KATHERINE

Yes!

ISABEL
Don't blow that in my direction! If my mother smells it on me again I'm done for!

KATHERINE
Get it lit then, Ali. Let us have some.

ALIZON
You stop hogging all the fruit wine, then.

ALIZON lights the bundle and takes a few drags. She picks up a stick and absent-mindedly draws a pattern in the dirt

ISABEL
What news of you and Matthew Holden?

ALIZON
Isabel, you are to be married in three days' time and yet you will concern yourself with me and Matty?!

ISABEL
I welcome the distraction. My bloody mother's wrangling with my last nerve!

KATHERINE
(Looking at the pattern ALIZON has drawn)
That's pretty. What is it?

ALIZON looks at it and shrugs

ALIZON
Now't, I don't think. Just an idle sigil.

ALIZON passes the lit bundle on to
ISABEL

ALIZON

(Sighing)

No news on Matthew, any matter. Still nothing.

KATHERINE

But the way he looks at you! There can be no doubt that he is sweet on you, also.

ALIZON

It would seem not. Perhaps he's just staring in case my face transfigures into my poor mother's?!

They laugh

ISABEL

If only there were some way to make him..

KATHERINE

(Interrupting)

Yes! A spell!

ALIZON

Shh, Katherine! So brazen when you speak of spells!

KATHERINE

Shush yerself! And pass that stinkhorn 'round will yer?

ALIZON

It doesn't matter, anyhow. Surely Matthew Holden should take a fancy to me without the use of spells and such nonsense.

ISABEL

(Laughing)

Usually I would say so, but young Matty seems particularly stubborn!

ALIZON

Truly! Why, only yesterday our hands touched at Church, and the reaction of him you'd have thought he'd brushed fingers with the Devil Himself!

KATHERINE

We must try something! Even just as pretend. Oh, what fun!

ISABEL

Go on, Alizon. You're the grand-daughter of a 'cunning woman!' Surely you've learned something from Old Demdike?

ALIZON

Isabel I'm surprised at you!

(Teasing her)

You'd never usually suggest trifling with sorcery!

ISABEL

Oh come, don't be such an addle-plot! It's all nonsense anyway.

KATHERINE

Indeed! Tinctures and herbs? Yes. There's no denying your Grandmother has a skill. But actual magic? Love potions?

ISABEL

Casting things into the fire and howling at the moon?!

KATHERINE howls, making ISABEL jump

ALIZON

(Laughing)

Well, as it happens I do know one...

ISABEL

What?! An actual spell?

KATHERINE

I knew it, I knew it! Let's do it now!

ISABEL

Please, Alizon - let's! What do we need?

KATHERINE

Don't let it be anything... unsavoury!

ALIZON

(Half-teasing)

We need very little. An apple, the reddest you can find.

ISABEL and KATHERINE stand, unsteady and feeling the effects of the pipe. They pretend to cast spells

ISABEL

What else?

ALIZON gently tosses the stick into the flames and the fire burns brighter and lets out a crackle. She is startled and checks if the girls noticed. To her relief they're preoccupied by pretending to be witches

ALIZON

Nine pins. You stick the pins into the apple, and speak the words "If thou be he that must have me; To be thy wedded bride. Make no delay but come away; This night to my bedside."

KATHERINE

(Excited)

Is that all of it?! We could wreak havoc on all the young men in Pendle by week's end!

The young girls shriek with laughter