

## FAIRY TALE

## CHARACTERS

PETRA - 16. Beautiful hair.

ROSE - late 30s. Petra's mother. Beautiful hair.

MRS. HARMON - late 50s. Cantankerous next-door neighbor.

EDDIE - 17. Neighbor on the other side. Has probably been yelled at a lot.

## SETTING

ROSE and PETRA's duplex, MRS. HARMON's garden. The living room is sparsely decorated, books overflowing everywhere. Rose and Petra's rooms are small, with a bed, bedside table, desk, nothing on walls. The basement is unfinished.

Probably Northwestern Ohio. Where it is flat, where there is a lot of sky. Where there are copses of trees every so often.

**MORNING**

*(ROSE is sitting outside on the back porch, in the heat, with a cup of coffee. Nothing makes noise except for the heat and the cicadas. From inside:)*

PETRA

(O.S.)

Mom?!

ROSE

Out here!

*(PETRA comes out. It is so so hot.)*

PETRA

God it's fucking hot out. Aren't you supposed to be at work?

ROSE

I'm leaving soon. I just wanted to feel the heat for a while.

*(she hugs her daughter)*

What are you going to do today?

PETRA

I don't know. Read? How late are you going to be?

ROSE

Later than usual. I'm sorry.

PETRA

Mom.

ROSE

I know, I'm sorry. When I get home, we'll do something fun. Do you want ice cream?

PETRA

We don't have any ice cream.

ROSE

We don't?

PETRA

No, it keeps melting before we get home. But maybe we can go get some? There's a new ice cream place over on High Street. I heard it was really good.

ROSE

Who did you hear that from?

PETRA

I heard about it on the radio. But we should go, Mom, /please -

ROSE

Shhhh.

*(ROSE stands up, listening to something. After a moment...)*

PETRA

What do you hear?

ROSE

Something.

PETRA

...I can't hear anything.

ROSE

I can hear it. It's definitely there.

*(Beat)*

PETRA

I still can't hear anything.

ROSE

Well, something's definitely there.

PETRA

What is it?

ROSE

Thunder...

PETRA

Mom, we're in the middle of a drought. There's no thunder.

ROSE

*(shrugging it off)*

Well then maybe it's just a heat storm.

PETRA

It's not that kind of heat.

ROSE

It's *some* kind of heat.

*(She begins to comb PETRA's hair with her fingers. EDDIE comes out to his yard, watches them from over the fence.)*

ROSE

Leave your hair down today.

PETRA

My neck gets sweaty.

ROSE

You could go over and check on Mrs. Harmon.

PETRA

Mom.

ROSE

What.

PETRA

She's so...

ROSE

I know, /I know.

PETRA

Old.

ROSE

Be nice. One day I'm going to be like that and you're going to have to take care of *me*.

PETRA

You will *not*. Please.

ROSE

You have so many *knots* in your hair.

PETRA

If it's going to be so hot out, can I go to the pool?

ROSE

How will you get there?

PETRA

I'll walk. It's not that far.

ROSE

Mmm. I don't know.

PETRA

Why not?

ROSE

I hate the people that go there.

PETRA

Who, mothers? Children? Mom, it's fine, everyone's nice there.

ROSE

Not everyone.

PETRA

Well - can't I just - really quickly? Otherwise I'll be stuck in the /house all day -

ROSE

Petra, no. Maybe this weekend we can go to the pool together.

*(looking at her watch)*

Shit, I'm late.

PETRA

When will you be home tonight?

ROSE

I told you baby, pretty late.

PETRA

Don't call me /baby.

ROSE

Don't answer the door to anyone, unless it's Mrs. Harmon.

PETRA

Yes, yes, I know the drill.

ROSE

Bye, babe!

PETRA

Don't call me /that, Mom -

ROSE

Bye!

*(She's gone.)*

PETRA

Don't call me baby!

*(From over the fence, EDDIE goes back inside. PETRA watches him go.)*

## AFTERNOON

*(From a corner of the living room, a small portable radio is playing soft music. PETRA lies on her stomach, rereading her story.)*

PETRA

Only when she came home would the ivy-drenched tower...

*(pause, scratching something out)*

*Drenched?* Fucking...*Jesus*...only when she came home would the tower come alive with the witch's stories. Dragons, wizards, evil wood nymphs. Trolls, goblins, sirens, sprites. Vanquished, vanquished, vanquished.

*(pause, scratching something out)*

"When will you teach me how to fly?" the girl asked.

"Soon," the witch replied. "It's dangerous to fly."

*(There's a knock on the door. PETRA, startled, goes to the door, looks through the peephole, and opens it. MRS. HARMON stands there, in a foul mood.)*

PETRA

Hi, Mrs. Harmon.

MRS. HARMON

*(barreling in)*

Someone is stealing my parsley! Do you know who it is?

PETRA

What?

MRS. HARMON

Do you know who is stealing my parsley?

PETRA

What? No. Why would anyone steal from your garden, we're in a drought. You can't grow anything.

MRS. HARMON

*I was growing parsley*, until it was **STOLEN** from me. Why would anyone want to steal parsley?! What are you going to do with parsley?

PETRA

You were - growing something? In this heat?

MRS. HARMON

Not SOMETHING, *parsley!* What a ridiculous thing to snatch out of a garden. *Now* what am I going to do?!

PETRA

How can you possibly grow something in this weather? It hasn't rained in almost a *year*.

MRS. HARMON

I bet it was that kid from next door. What's his name.

PETRA

Eddie?

MRS. HARMON

Yes. Him. Nasty. Nasty, nasty. I bet *he* stole it.

PETRA

You just said so yourself, Mrs. Harmon, what would he want with parsley?

MRS. HARMON

Maybe he thought it was - some kind of MARIJUANA!

(PETRA *considers responding, but moves on.*)

PETRA

Well, I feel bad for Eddie. He must be really lonely over there. I hear his parents fighting all the time. You could just ask him if he did something -

MRS. HARMON

Like he'd tell me the truth. They're all a bunch of liars. My husband lied. My father lied. My son lied. They're all disgusting.

PETRA

Who are you talking about?

MRS. HARMON

Men! They're all big fat liars!

PETRA

Not *all* of them.

MRS. HARMON

Oh *really*? REALLY?! Where are they? Answer me that. Where's my father? He made a new family every time he got bored. I have about nine million brothers and sisters, all scattered around the country like Johnny Apple Seedlings. And my husband?

PETRA

Your husband *died*, that wasn't *his* fault.

MRS. HARMON

Oho! Pretty convenient, dying in a war, leaving me to take care of his only child!

PETRA

Mrs. Harmon, that's -

MRS. HARMON

And my son! *Ungrateful* - he *never* appreciated me. What did I ever do to him? Tried to raise him, clothe him, feed him, teach him - and he left too! They all leave!

PETRA

Not all of them leave. You can't say stuff like that, it's not true.

MRS. HARMON

Oh no?! Where's *your* father?

PETRA

I don't have one.

MRS. HARMON

Everyone *has* one. What happened to yours?

PETRA

It's not really an interesting story. He and my mom dated a little in college. They broke up. Then she found out she was pregnant. He doesn't know I exist.

MRS. HARMON

So he *did* leave!

PETRA

No, he didn't, I *just* /said -

MRS. HARMON

He left your mother, so he left you! They all leave, they all lie, that's the thing about men.

PETRA

*(under her breath)*

Jesus, lady.

MRS. HARMON

Oh, sure, JESUS - don't get me started on /him -

PETRA

Mrs. Harmon, did you need something?

MRS. HARMON

What?

PETRA

Did you need something? You came over here because you needed something? Or no?

MRS. HARMON

I needed to know if you knew who stole my parsley.

PETRA

I don't know.

*(MRS. HARMON makes no move to leave. PETRA sits, MRS. HARMON sits. They stare at each other.)*

MRS. HARMON

Don't know *why* anyone would steal -

PETRA

Why were you growing parsley anyway?

MRS. HARMON

It happens to be one of my garden specialties.

PETRA

Is it a hardy plant? Like can it handle all this heat?

MRS. HARMON

Anything can *adjust*. You can teach anything to adjust. Plants are alive just like people, we have the same basic functions.

PETRA

And it was growing?

MRS. HARMON  
You're very skeptical of me.

PETRA  
No, I'm just impressed.  
*(pause)*  
It's my namesake, you know.

MRS. HARMON  
What's your namesake?

PETRA  
Parsley.

MRS. HARMON  
Your name is Parsley? I thought your name was Petra.

PETRA  
No, it is, just - Petra is short for Petronella. That's the Latin root for parsley.

MRS. HARMON  
It's not.

PETRA  
What? Yes it is.

MRS. HARMON  
No, it's not. The Latin root for parsley is Petroselinum.

PETRA  
What?! Nuh-uh!

*(PETRA goes over to one of the many books scattered around the living room floor. She wrenches open an encyclopedia.)*

PETRA  
Fuck!

MRS. HARMON  
Oh - LANGUAGE!

PETRA

But - my mother *swore* to me that Petronella was the Latin root for parsley! She told me she named me Petronella because she knew I would be sharp and savory, just like the plant!

MRS. HARMON

Your mother told you a little fib. And anyway, what kind of word is *savory* to describe a child? And how could she know anything about you when you were just a baby?

PETRA

She said she's always known me, even before /she had me -

MRS. HARMON

*(catching sight of the pages on the floor)*

What's that?

PETRA

Don't touch that! Don't touch that.

MRS. HARMON

What *was* that?

PETRA

A - a story.

MRS. HARMON

What kind of story?

PETRA

A fairy tale.

MRS. HARMON

Oh! I love those. Let me read it.

PETRA

Absofuckinglutely not.

MRS. HARMON

Language! You are - you have a foul mouth!

PETRA

You are not my mother.

MRS. HARMON

Let me read it!

PETRA

No.

MRS. HARMON

Why not? I'm sure it's wonderful.

PETRA

No. And anyway, it's not finished.

MRS. HARMON

Well, what's it about?

(*beat*)

Just tell me!

PETRA

It's about a girl! In a tower.

MRS. HARMON

A girl? In a tower? That's it?

PETRA

No, that's not *it*. She's - she's training to be a witch. There's a witch who looks after her, and she goes out sometimes to conquer evil and protect the girl and get food and magic supplies and stuff.

MRS. HARMON

So? What happens?

PETRA

What?

MRS. HARMON

What happens in the story? Something has to *happen* in the story.

PETRA

I'm not done yet. I - I may introduce another character.

MRS. HARMON

What kind of character?

PETRA

I don't know, somebody. A boy, I don't know.

MRS. HARMON

*(gasping)*

Don't introduce a boy! He'll ruin everything! Witches don't need husbands!

PETRA

What? How do you know?

MRS. HARMON

Have you ever met a married witch? That's insane!

PETRA

Well you haven't read it. It makes sense when you read it.

MRS. HARMON

So let me read it.

PETRA

No. Not happening. Nope. No!

MRS. HARMON

Oh, fine, be that way.

*(MRS. HARMON sits back down, making herself comfortable.)*

MRS. HARMON

Your mother's working late again, isn't she.

PETRA

Yes.

MRS. HARMON

It must be very boring here all by yourself all day.

PETRA

Well, I read.

MRS. HARMON

Even during the school year?

PETRA

Oh - then I do homework.

MRS. HARMON

Homework for what?! You don't go to school!

PETRA

I do too, I'm homeschooled. My mother homeschools me.

MRS. HARMON

It must be boring, that's all. All alone here, every day.

*(beat, she's been planning this)*

How would you like to help me in my garden?

PETRA

Uh.

MRS. HARMON

You might as well say yes, you have nothing better to do, you just said. You can help me replant all my parsley! That that *horrible, disgusting, nasty boy stole* -

PETRA

You don't know he stole it.

MRS. HARMON

Stop deflecting. Come help me in the garden. Sometimes I - I can't bend down all the way, I need someone to pick things for me. I'll teach you how to garden in a drought.

PETRA

Fine. Okay. But not today. Today I want to write.

MRS. HARMON

Are you going to add a husband? You'll be the first writer to ever give the witch a husband.

PETRA

Witches can have husbands!

MRS. HARMON

Come over tomorrow. And ask that Eddie boy if he **STOLE** my **PARSLEY!**

PETRA

I can't just *ask* him that!

MRS. HARMON

You're right, he probably doesn't even speak developed English. Tomorrow?

PETRA

Yes. Fine. Tomorrow.

*(MRS. HARMON exits. PETRA immediately goes down to her pages. She starts doing some rewrites.)*

PETRA

*(to herself, bitterly)*

Witches can have husbands.

**DUSK**

*(PETRA is eating dinner in the living room. She is reading from a book as she eats. The radio is playing the news.)*

NEWSCASTER

...don't know what to tell you, folks, this heat is simply unbearable and unprecedented. Crank up your air conditioners tonight -

*(PETRA reaches over and turns off the radio. All of the sudden, someone knocks on the door again.)*

PETRA

Uggghhhh. COMING, MRS. HARMON.

*(PETRA gets up and opens the door. It is not MRS. HARMON. It is EDDIE.)*

PETRA

Oh - God - hi.

EDDIE

/Hi.

PETRA

Hi, /uh -

EDDIE

Hi.

*(Deep beat.)*

PETRA

/Can I -

EDDIE

Sorry, I didn't really know what I was going to say when I got here.

PETRA

What?

EDDIE

Yeah, sorry.

PETRA

Why did you come to the door, then?

EDDIE

Uh. I wanted to ask, uh. My mom wanted me to ask your mom something.

PETRA

Oh. Well. She's not here right now.

EDDIE

Oh. You're alone in there?

PETRA

Yeah. Do you wanna - come in?

EDDIE

....Sure.

*(PETRA steps aside so that EDDIE can come in.)*

PETRA

Sorry - do you even know my name?

EDDIE

Sure I do. It's Petrol or something.

PETRA

What?

EDDIE

Just kidding, it's Petronella. I remember.

PETRA

Really it's just Petra.

EDDIE

Petra. Right. Do you know my name?

PETRA

Of course. I mean - yeah. Eddie.

EDDIE

Yeah.

PETRA  
Yeah.

*(Another deep pause)*

EDDIE  
So, when do you /think your -

PETRA  
Did you steal Mrs. Harmon's parsley?

EDDIE  
What?

PETRA  
Oh, shit! I'm so sorry, I - I shouldn't have asked that so, uh -

EDDIE  
Her parsley? Who's Mrs. Harmon? That crazy lady next door to you?

PETRA  
Yeah, yeah, sorry. She comes over here sometimes. She was complaining that someone had stolen her parsley. Or something. I don't know. She wanted me to ask you - I don't know. She's pretty fucking bat shit. I'm sorry - it's not about you.

EDDIE  
She's fucking crazy. I didn't steal her parsley.

PETRA  
No, no of course, yeah. No, I knew you didn't. I just - sorry, I shouldn't have done that, ah fuck, sorry.

EDDIE  
Who would even want to steal parsley anyway?

PETRA  
I know, that's what I told her.

EDDIE  
Every time I walk by her house she always looks like she's about to throw something at me.

PETRA

She's a little...she's just all alone.

EDDIE

Well. Yeah, I guess.

PETRA

Yeah.

*(Shallower pause.)*

EDDIE

When does your mom get home?

PETRA

Not until late.

EDDIE

Oh. Where is she?

PETRA

At work. What did you want to ask her?

EDDIE

My mom was just like, wanting to borrow an egg or something. I forget.

PETRA

Oh. Well, we don't have any eggs. And she won't be home for a while.

EDDIE

Right, okay. How come I never see you around ever?

PETRA

What do you mean?

EDDIE

You don't go to school.

PETRA

My mom homeschool me.

EDDIE

...Why?

PETRA

She says the education system in this country is falling apart and she can't trust anyone else with something as beautiful and fragile as my brain.

EDDIE

What?

PETRA

Um. Yeah. She just - likes it to be just us.

EDDIE

But then she leaves all day?

PETRA

She has to work.

EDDIE

I wish my parents were gone all day. That would be the best. My dad goes to work, like *sometimes*, and my mom just sits and drinks all day. She says she sick. She's a fucking liar. They always lie.

PETRA

Who always lies?

EDDIE

Mothers. At least *my* mom does anyway.

PETRA

Oh.

EDDIE

So what do you do here all day?

PETRA

I read, mostly.

EDDIE

What do you read?

PETRA

You know, whatever. During the school year I have all these lessons to do, but during the summer, I can read whatever I want.

EDDIE

What kind of lessons?

PETRA

All kinds. Calculus. German. East Asian Poetry. My mom's teaching me auto-mechanics.

*(EDDIE looks at her and laughs like it's a joke. It's not. He turns around and evaluates the stacks of books.)*

EDDIE

Where do you get all your books?

PETRA

My mom brings them home for me from the library.

EDDIE

What kind of books does she bring home?

PETRA

Uhhh...mostly fairy tales and like fantasy and that shit.

EDDIE

That sounds kind of boring.

PETRA

Well - I - don't *just* read, of course. I mean I write too, you know.

EDDIE

Oh. You do?

PETRA

Yeah. I'm, well - I'm working on a thing. It's kind of stupid. I mean. I haven't finished it yet. I only just like...started to write. Just like this summer.

EDDIE

Yeah, I write too.

PETRA

You do?!

EDDIE

Yeah. Just small stuff. I don't know. Whatever.

PETRA

That's awesome!

EDDIE

Yeah, I guess. What's your story about?

PETRA

Well...there's this girl and she lives in a tower with a witch. She's like, in training to be a witch too, but the problem is that witching can be really dangerous, and there's all these monsters that live beyond the tower, so it's the older witch who goes out and fights them and shit. I. Um. I don't know. I'm thinking of introducing a new character.

EDDIE

Sounds kind of fucked up.

PETRA

What?

EDDIE

I mean, she's locked in a tower?

PETRA

She's not locked anywhere.

EDDIE

The old witch is the only one who's allowed to leave? She's probably just lying to the chick about there being monsters out there.

PETRA

She's not lying!

EDDIE

Well, has the girl seen for herself?

PETRA

Um.

*(Pause.)*

EDDIE

Sorry, I, uh. Didn't mean to like rewrite your shit or anything.

PETRA

No - this is good. These are good...notes.

(beat)

What's your story about?

EDDIE

Okay. So. This guy is like on a quest to get this really powerful sword, right? It's just him and his girlfriend on the quest. His girlfriend is really hot, like this hot older lady with all this beautiful hair that goes down to her back and shit and she's a total fucking badass. Like she's tough as nails, you know? But like they have to go through all this territory full of these evil leech creatures that just try and bring him down. It's like this whole big thing. It's like this big battle over who controls the world.

PETRA

Ohhh. And so the guy is trying to like...take control back from the evil creatures?

EDDIE

Yeah, I guess.

PETRA

That sounds terrifying.

EDDIE

Yeah, and it turns out that his girlfriend is actually possessed by one of them, right, cause she's on the quest with him but then one day they're fighting the creatures off and she's like, "I would *die* for you." And then he *knows* that she's possessed. So he kills her and gets away.

PETRA

Why?! Why would he do that?

EDDIE

Cause she's *possessed*.

PETRA

No, but - how did he know she was possessed?

EDDIE

Well, it's obvious, right? The girl he loves is like a badass bitch, she's not a *coward*, and there's a big difference between "I would die for you" and "I would kill for you." I mean, what use is she going to be if she's dead?

PETRA

Wow.

EDDIE

Yeah, it's pretty intense.

PETRA

*(beat)*

Hey, I...do you wanna like...switch off and read each other's stories?

EDDIE

Uhhh...

PETRA

Yeah, and we could give each other notes. Just cause like, your notes were really helpful just now...

EDDIE

Yeah, okay.

*(PETRA grabs her pages from the floor and slowly gives them to EDDIE.)*

PETRA

Just - don't make fun of me when you read it.

EDDIE

No, I won't. And uh same for me.

PETRA

Yeah, yeah.

EDDIE

Okay, I'll bring my shit over later tonight -

*(The door opens. ROSE is home, carrying grocery bags. She stares at the two of them a moment before coming all the way into the living room.)*

EDDIE

Uh. Hi.

ROSE

Who are you?

PETRA

Mom, this is - this is Eddie, from next door?

ROSE

Oh. Right.

PETRA

Mom, I thought you weren't going to be home until late.

ROSE

I got done early.

PETRA

Oh. Okay. Great. You went grocery shopping? Did you get eggs?

ROSE

Eddie, sorry, but you need to leave.

PETRA

Mom, can't - we were just hanging out, is that okay? Can he stay?

ROSE

No. Not tonight.

PETRA

Why? He just wanted to borrow an egg - did you get /eggs?

ROSE

Nice to meet you, Eddie.

*(EDDIE stares at ROSE, then moves towards the door. ROSE is blocking it, shrewdly inspecting him.)*

EDDIE

It was very nice to meet you, ma'am.

PETRA

Uh - Eddie - will you bring by the thing tomorrow?

EDDIE

Yeah, I will.

PETRA

Great.

*(EDDIE tries to leave. ROSE steps aside.)*

EDDIE

*(looking at ROSE)*

I'll see you, Petra.

PETRA

Bye, Eddie.

*(ROSE closes the door behind him.)*

ROSE

What thing?

PETRA

What?

ROSE

He'll bring by what thing?

PETRA

N-nothing.

ROSE

What *thing*, Petra?

PETRA

A pool noodle.

*(Beat)*

ROSE

A pool noodle?

PETRA

For when we go to the pool this weekend.

*(Beat)*

ROSE

I hate him.

PETRA

He can still probably hear you, Jesus!

ROSE

I *hate* that boy, Petra.

PETRA

Why, he's *nice*!

ROSE

I don't trust him. I am an excellent judge of character. He's untrustworthy.

PETRA

I think you're overreacting.

*(ROSE exits. PETRA waits a moment to make sure her mother is preoccupied before rushing to the rest of her pages on the floor. She folds them up and hides them underneath a couch cushion.)*

PETRA

Hey, did you buy eggs?

*(ROSE comes in.)*

ROSE

No, I didn't. Why are you suddenly so obsessed with eggs?

*(She stops, listening hard. She's heard something.)*

PETRA

Mom?

ROSE

Shhh.

PETRA

What do you hear?

*(no answer)*

Hel-lo?

ROSE

Damnit.

PETRA

What?!

ROSE  
That's the second time in an hour.

PETRA  
Second time what?

ROSE  
I heard it on my /way home in the car -

PETRA  
Mom, what did you hear?

ROSE  
I don't know! But it's definitely something. Sounds like...thunder again.

PETRA  
Uh...there's no thunder. The /radio said -

ROSE  
What's with the eggs? Do you want an omelet?

PETRA  
Well, what *did* you buy?

ROSE  
Ah. Well. This.  
*(She picks up a crow bar from within her shopping bags.)*

PETRA  
Are you...doing construction work?

ROSE  
We don't have enough weapons.

PETRA  
...What?

ROSE  
*(she listens)*  
Fuck, it's getting louder.

PETRA

Weapons?!

ROSE

Well. We're going to have to come to the realization eventually that we don't have a lot of - ah - tools to protect ourselves with.

PETRA

Protect ourselves from *what?!*

ROSE

From anything.

PETRA

What are you *saying?*

ROSE

Baby, it's important to be prepared.

PETRA

Mom, please don't call me *baby*.

*(ROSE has not heard. She's listening again. She picks up her grocery bags and walks out of the living room. PETRA builds up her courage.)*

PETRA

Mom, can I ask you something?

ROSE

*(O.S.)*

Always.

PETRA

Why - uh - why did you name me Petronella?

ROSE

*(O.S.)*

What?

PETRA

My name. Why did you name me Petronella?

*(ROSE re-enters.)*

ROSE

I've told you that before. It's the Latin root for parsley.

PETRA

It's - well, it's actually not the Latin root for parsley.

ROSE

What do you mean? Yes it is.

PETRA

No, apparently the Latin root for parsley is Petroselinum.

ROSE

What? Who told you that, baby?

PETRA

No one did! No one! I read it in a book!

ROSE

Which book?

PETRA

*(grabbing the encyclopedia, showing her mother)*

See? See? Right there. Petroselinum.

ROSE

Huh. Well. I don't know what to tell you.

*(She exits.)*

PETRA

You - that's *it*?

ROSE

*(O.S.)*

What do you mean?

PETRA

You don't know what to tell me?

ROSE

*(coming back in)*

What do you want me to say, Petra?

PETRA

I'm *sorry*?

ROSE

Why do you want me to apologize?

PETRA

Because - it was a lie! You lied to me!

ROSE

Hey, hey, hey - when have I *ever* lied to you?

PETRA

Latin! Latin root!

ROSE

I didn't *know* it wasn't the Latin root for parsley. Someone told me it was, and I liked it.

PETRA

Okay, well - well just because you didn't *know* it was a lie doesn't make it any *less* of a lie! Who told you that?

ROSE

I don't understand what the big deal is, baby. Do you feel like you've lost a connection to parsley? I wan't under the impression that you had a great affinity for gardening.

PETRA

Well - I *do*. Yeah, I'm going over to Mrs. Harmon's tomorrow and I'm - I'm helping her garden. She's going to teach me how to garden.

ROSE

...Okay, so you're gardening!

PETRA

Stop that! It's not funny!

(PETRA *starts to cry. She throws herself on the couch.*)

ROSE

Hey. Hey, hey, hey.

(ROSE *goes to her daughter. They sit together.*)

I'm sorry that you feel betrayed. It's an awful thing to feel betrayed.

PETRA

*Why* did you name me that?

ROSE

Someone told me it was the Latin root for parsley. I liked it. It's not that mysterious of a story.

PETRA

Right, but *who* told you?

ROSE

I can't remember.

*(PETRA throws her a look)*

I'm telling the truth, I really can't remember!

PETRA

Was it my father?

ROSE

No. Why?

PETRA

Just curious.

*(Brief pause)*

ROSE

Beautiful, beautiful girl. Just you and me, right? You and me and nobody else. Just the two of us.

PETRA

Yeah. Just us.

ROSE

*(taking out PETRA's hair and combing it with her fingers)*

Oh, Petra, why do you always wear your hair like this? We have to take care of our hair. That's the best part of us, you know that? The strongest part of us. It's a sign that we're different and special.

PETRA

I know, Mom, you've told me that before.

ROSE

I know that you must feel very lonely sometimes, Petronella, but...I'm trying very hard to keep you safe. Most people out in the world are just not very kind.

PETRA

I know. Was my father not very kind?

ROSE

He...wouldn't have understood you like I do.

*(beat)*

Why are you asking about your father all of the sudden?

PETRA

I don't know. No reason.

ROSE

You know, just because someone's nice to you on the outside doesn't mean that they're *good* for you. We are better than *all* of them, Petronella. It can be hard to remember that sometimes, but I'm going to need you to try. We're separate and different. Our hair, remember?

PETRA

Yeah.

ROSE

Identical.

*(Pause. They hold each other. ROSE hears something again.)*

PETRA

What is it?

ROSE

*Shh!*

PETRA

Mom? What is it?

ROSE

How can you not hear this? It's so *loud!*

PETRA

Well, I can't.

ROSE

Shh!

Mom, I -

Shh! I'm listening, baby.  
*(beat)*

It's gone.

Mom, please don't call me baby.

PETRA

ROSE

PETRA

**LATE EVENING**

(ROSE steps outside on the back porch. She is deep in thought. MRS. HARMON appears over the other side of the fence.)

MRS. HARMON

You're home early.

ROSE

Shit!

MRS. HARMON

You curse too much in front of that girl. She has a foul mouth. Did you know how much she curses?

ROSE

You scared me.

MRS. HARMON

I said, did you know how much she /curses?

ROSE

They're just words.

MRS. HARMON

They're *bad* words.

ROSE

Mrs. Harmon, did you hear that sound earlier?

MRS. HARMON

Hear what?

(no answer)

You shouldn't be leaving her alone so much.

ROSE

You didn't hear anything?

MRS. HARMON

No. What are you talking about?

ROSE

I swear to God, it was *loud*.

MRS. HARMON

Well, what did it sound like? I bet it was all the air conditioners. Every person on this miserable block is blasting their air conditioner at full power, it's horrible! I swear whenever I walk down this street it sounds like...like a billion trillion LOCUSTS all buzzing their way to eat all of us!

ROSE

It wasn't the ACs.

MRS. HARMON

Well, then. I don't know what you're talking about.

ROSE

You're sure you didn't hear anything?

MRS. HARMON

I'm *sure*.

*(Pause)*

ROSE

Did you see that boy Eddie come over here today?

MRS. HARMON

What? He did?

ROSE

Yes.

MRS. HARMON

No, I didn't see him.

ROSE

Well, he came over today, and he was spending time with Petra. If you see him on his way over at some point tomorrow, could you come by and make sure -

MRS. HARMON

Oh, *absolutely*. She's far too young to see what men are made of.

*(ROSE gives her a withering stare.)*

ROSE

It's not *Petra* with the poor impulse control...

MRS. HARMON

Right - I - that's what I meant too. I'll - sure, I'll look out for them.

ROSE

Thank you.

MRS. HARMON

Besides, she won't even have the time to so much as *look* at him tomorrow! She's coming over to help me replant all the parsley he dug up -

ROSE

Mmm. She might be too busy.

MRS. HARMON

*(laughing harshly)*

Too busy with WHAT? You might give her things to do in the winter, but that girl is bored SENSELESS while you're gone in the summer. It'll be good for her! She'll be able to learn a little something about what *real* food looks like. Can't rely on store-bought forever, you know. You need to perfect a skill! It's hard to perfect a skill!

ROSE

*(disdainfully)*

A skill. Gardening. You cannot garden in this heat.

MRS. HARMON

You can garden in anything.

ROSE

Not the apocalypse.

MRS. HARMON

Is that the nonsense you're filling her head with?! You isolate her too much. Does she have any friends? No wonder she's writing that sad, awful /story -

ROSE

Mrs. Harmon, I have to be very upfront with you about something.

MRS. HARMON

Uh - okay.

ROSE

Did you ask her about her father today?

MRS. HARMON

No.

ROSE

We, as a general policy, do not talk about him. Please don't mention her father to her again. It's ignited within her a curiosity that will only be disappointed.

MRS. HARMON

Why don't you talk about him?

ROSE

There are a multitude of reasons.

MRS. HARMON

Well, far be it from *me* to convince you to talk about a *man!* Who needs a father? What can a father figure teach you that a mother figure couldn't?!

ROSE

Exactly.

*(Beat)*

MRS. HARMON

Is he refusing to pay child support?

*(ROSE gives her a look. Child support is clearly not a part of this story.)*

MRS. HARMON

Oh. Was he violent?

ROSE

*(snorting)*

He didn't have the constitution to be violent.

MRS. HARMON

Oh, so he was a drinker? Did he -

ROSE

There is nothing traumatic about this! We *choose* not to talk to him.

MRS. HARMON

Then what was wrong with him?

ROSE

What's wrong with all of them? They *think* they want to be involved but there is nothing nurturing in their conditioning.

MRS. HARMON

He wanted to be /involved?

ROSE

*(impatient)*

He wanted all baby makes three bullshit, but I told him under no circumstances is he coming near us. It's just the two of us, we belong to each other. Me, and her, and no body else -

MRS. HARMON

So he knows about her?

ROSE

Mrs. Harmon. I have chosen to raise my daughter in a specific way for a specific purpose. I am *specifically* rejecting child support, hospital records, *co-parenting* - all a world of men keeping tabs on their subjects. I dislike questions, I dislike inquisitions. Of any kind. From *anyone*.

*(Beat)*

MRS. HARMON

She's going to keep asking until she's blue in the face. You know that, don't you?

ROSE

What?

MRS. HARMON

You can lock her up all you want, you can bat away this boy until the next one comes, and you can lie out of your pants about the world coming to an end, but she is going to want to know answers and she will not stop searching for them.

*(Beat)*

ROSE

Keep an eye on her tomorrow, will you? I can't have her speaking to that neanderthal.

MRS. HARMON

I told you, she won't have even the slightest bit of time to speak to him tomorrow, she'll be helping me replant parsley all day!

Whatever you say, Mrs. Harmon.

ROSE

I do say!

MRS. HARMON

Goodnight, Mrs. Harmon.

ROSE

**MIDNIGHT**

*(PETRA alone in her room. She is writing. Her light is on.)*

ROSE

*(O.S.)*

Turn off your light, Petra!

PETRA

I'm almost done!

*(ROSE comes to the door. She turns off the light.)*

ROSE

Bed time.

PETRA

Mom, I'm literally almost an adult.

ROSE

*(laughing harshly)*

Absofuckinglutely not! Put your hair down, it'll get knots.

PETRA

Fine. Goodnight, Mom.

ROSE

Goodnight, baby.

*(ROSE exits. The light from her room goes off. PETRA waits for a second, then turns the overhead light back on. She goes back to reading her pages.)*

PETRA

He was heavy like an anchor that would keep her chained to safety...

*(she pauses)*

...He came to the tower and he knocked down the door.

*(she crosses something out)*

Knocked *on* the door...

*(another pause)*

The old witch was out fighting a minotaur that day. When she flew back in, she said, "You are the pinnacle of my achievements."

"What do you mean?" the girl asked.

“You’re separate from the rest of them,” she explained. “Like an unspoiled blossom. The hardest thing you’ll have to learn is how to go out into the world and stay you. The monsters will want you to be porous, they’ll want you to open up and soak in all their disasters, but you have to remain perfect.”

*(The sound of someone scuffling up the walls. PETRA jumps in surprise. EDDIE’s face appears at the window. He is struggling to maintain his grip from the window sill.)*

PETRA

Jesus Christ!

EDDIE

Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your long hair!

PETRA

What are you doing here?!

*(PETRA goes to the window.)*

EDDIE

I saw your light was on. I came over. Uh, is your mom home?

PETRA

Yes, oh my God.

EDDIE

Let me in.

PETRA

She is going to kill me.

EDDIE

I know, right?

*(grunting)*

Ugh help me up.

*(PETRA lifts the screen to her window and EDDIE clambers into her room.)*

PETRA

My mom is going to kill me!

EDDIE

This is your room?

PETRA

Uh, yeah.

EDDIE

It's different than I imagined it.

PETRA

Why?

EDDIE

It's...plainer.

PETRA

Plainer?

EDDIE

Yeah, like I thought there would be more on the walls and stuff.

PETRA

Oh. What would I put on the walls?

EDDIE

I don't know, band posters or whatever?

PETRA

I'm not really into that kind of stuff.

EDDIE

Yeah, that's not surprising.

PETRA

Did you bring the thing?

EDDIE

What thing?

PETRA

Your writing. Your story, I mean.

EDDIE

Oh. No. I didn't. Sorry. Forgot.

Oh. PETRA

But I did read yours. EDDIE

*(He takes out her pages from his back pocket and hands them to her.)*

You did? PETRA

Yeah. EDDIE

...And? PETRA

You're - really good at writing. EDDIE

Thanks. PETRA

But I didn't understand it. EDDIE

Oh. PETRA

*(Deflation.)*

Sorry. EDDIE

What, uh - what didn't you understand? PETRA

Why won't the witch teach her how to fly? Why won't she let her use any of her powers? EDDIE

Because, she's too young. I thought I talked about that. It's too dangerous. PETRA

EDDIE

Yeah, but she's a *witch*. Witches have *magic*. I don't know, it just seems weird. You should have her learn how to fly on her own, and then go out exploring for herself. I bet she'll find *no* monsters if she goes out on her own. Or if she does, they're actually like, good, not evil. You know, you should just kill the witch off.

PETRA

What?! I can't do that!

EDDIE

Sure you can. It's *your* story. If the girl has to fend for herself, all kinds of interesting shit will happen.

*(Pause)*

Sorry. Did I piss you off?

PETRA

What? No. No, of course not. I'm just thinking.

EDDIE

You should just embrace that the witch is evil. Witches are evil, right? They steal children and shit. I mean that's what those fantasy novels all say. You would know, right?

PETRA

Right.

EDDIE

So, uh...what's up with your mom?

PETRA

What do you mean?

EDDIE

She seemed pretty surprised to see me.

PETRA

Well, I've never really hung out with a boy before.

EDDIE

Oh, really?

PETRA

Yeah.

EDDIE

Why would that make her angry, though?

PETRA

Uh, I don't know. It's, I don't know. We're pretty much each other's best friends, you know.

EDDIE

What, she doesn't want you to have like a boyfriend or anything?

PETRA

I don't know. I don't think so. It's never come up before.

EDDIE

But don't *you* want one?

PETRA

Well...yeah.

EDDIE

I kinda want one too. A girlfriend. Like, to go on adventures with me and shit.

PETRA

Yeah, I know. Me too.

EDDIE

*(beat)*

Is your name really Petronella?

PETRA

Yeah.

EDDIE

Like on your birth certificate and everything?

PETRA

Yeah, duh. I mean. I think. I've never actually seen my birth certificate before. Have you?

EDDIE

I don't think so.

PETRA

Well, it was all my mom's idea. Someone told her it was the Latin root for parsley and she liked it. Except...it's *not* the Latin root for parsley. It's just a name.

EDDIE

What did your dad say when your mom wanted to name you after an *herb*?

PETRA

Oh, I don't have a dad.

EDDIE

You don't?

PETRA

Uh, not really, I guess. He and my mom dated a little in college but then they broke up. She didn't tell him she was pregnant.

EDDIE

Why not?

PETRA

I don't know. She said we didn't need a father.

EDDIE

Wow.

PETRA

What?

EDDIE

You two are...

PETRA

What?

EDDIE

...different.

PETRA

Yeah, yeah, I know. She always says that we're different from everybody else -

EDDIE

No, I mean different from each other. If it weren't for the hair, like, I wouldn't even be able to tell she was your mom.

PETRA

Really? How are we different?

EDDIE

Well, like, you're like...I don't know, she just seems like she could really destroy someone, and you...

PETRA

I what?

EDDIE

I don't know, you're like, sweet. Or whatever.

PETRA

Oh.

EDDIE

I don't know. Just something I noticed.

PETRA

Oh. Huh. I always thought we were the same. You know she says we belong to each other.

EDDIE

*Belong?* That's a weird word to use. Hey, where's your bathroom?

PETRA

Uh, down the hall.

EDDIE

Be right back.

*(EDDIE leaves the room. PETRA pauses, then grabs her papers. EDDIE drifts over to ROSE's room. He puts his ear on the door and listens. Lights up on ROSE's room. She's listening very intently. Distant thunder, but only in her room. ROSE gets up slowly from her bed and creeps to her door. The thunder gets louder as she approaches. When she puts her ear to the door, EDDIE backs away. Meanwhile, PETRA reads, then crumples up each paper. She throws them away.)*

PETRA

Shit. He's totally fucking right.

(PETRA goes to the door. EDDIE goes back to PETRA's room. As soon as he's inside the room, ROSE opens her door and peers down the hallway.)

Hi. PETRA

Hey. EDDIE

Did you see my mom out there? PETRA

No. EDDIE

Oh, okay. Good. PETRA  
(beat)

You know, you were totally right about all of this. I can't wait to read your thing.

It's not that great. EDDIE

Don't say that. PETRA

You're a better writer than I am. EDDIE

*Definitely* don't say *that*. PETRA

Nah, you are. EDDIE

Stop. PETRA

I don't know, I guess you were right. Sometimes I get tired of just writing about people fighting evil creatures all the time. EDDIE

PETRA

Well, sometimes I get tired of writing fairy tales.

EDDIE

It's just like. You write what you know. Or whatever.

PETRA

You know about fighting evil creatures?

EDDIE

Well, not like *really*, but it's all I want to do.

PETRA

Who do you want to fight?

EDDIE

People. Stuff. Just like, I don't know. Sometimes you look around you and you just kind of want to fuck shit up, just like change the energy of it, right? That's physics, right? You want to rip something up from the roots.

*(Pause)*

Hey, thanks for hanging out with me.

PETRA

You came over here.

EDDIE

Oh yeah.

PETRA

No, I mean - what I meant was like, *I* should be the one saying thank you.

EDDIE

Yeah, I guess.

*(beat)*

Do you wanna hang out again tomorrow?

PETRA

Yeah, sure.

EDDIE

Maybe in the evening or something? I mean, like - I know your mom will be home, but I - I got some stuff I gotta do tomorrow during the day.

PETRA

Yeah, okay. Sounds good.

EDDIE

Okay. Bye.

*(He leaves out the window again.)*

PETRA

Bye.

**MORNING**

*(PETRA enters the living room, her pages in hand. ROSE is sitting on the chair, staring into space, listening. She does not look like she's gotten any sleep.)*

PETRA

Mom?

*(she looks at her watch)*

Jesus, Mom, you're really late for work.

ROSE

I'm not going.

PETRA

Why not?

ROSE

I've been up all night thinking. There's too much to do.

PETRA

For what?

ROSE

I have to go out and buy gas. Lots of gas. Gallons of gas. We're going to need it. Stockpile.

PETRA

What? Mom - /what?

ROSE

No, I - I'll go to work first.

*(she gets up)*

I'm going to walk to work. Save gas.

PETRA

Does your boss know you're going to be late? Why do we need gas?

ROSE

There's a storm coming, Petra.

PETRA

Mom, I told you I heard the news yesterday -

ROSE

FUCK THE NEWS. I can tell. We need to start thinking long term. While I'm gone, can you round up all the loose batteries we have? Test them for me, test all the batteries and then make a pile of the ones that work and just throw out the ones that don't, and then we'll see how much more we need to get. Every little thing counts. I need to make a list.

*(She grabs a pen and paper and starts to jot things down.)*

PETRA

Mom, you're kind of scaring me.

ROSE

Well, it's scary right now, okay? I don't mean to alarm you, baby, but something is *coming*, and we need to prepare ourselves. Maybe you need to rid yourself of any bad influences in your life and then you'll understand what I'm talking about.

PETRA

What bad influences?

ROSE

Anything that's distracting.

PETRA

Are you talking about Eddie?

ROSE

I'm not fighting with you about this, Petra.

PETRA

I'm not fighting. Are you talking about Eddie?

ROSE

You're picking a fight with me.

PETRA

Why would I be picking a fight with you?!

ROSE

You know I don't like that boy, but you're *bored*, and you don't want to entertain the idea that he might be *bad* for you.

PETRA

Mom! You don't /even know him -

ROSE  
What's that?

PETRA  
What?

ROSE  
In your hand.

PETRA  
Nothing.

ROSE  
Petra, what is it? What are you hiding from me?

PETRA  
It's nothing, it's just something that I've been writing.

ROSE  
You're *writing*? I didn't know you wrote. What are you writing about?

PETRA  
I don't know. Nothing!

ROSE  
You don't know what you're writing about?

PETRA  
I'm writing about nothing.

ROSE  
Petra, stop playing dumb! I hate it when you do that.

*(PETRA stares at her mother. There's almost no way out of this.)*

PETRA  
It's...about this girl. She's magical, but she's been kept in a tower by this evil witch her whole life so she's never gotten a chance to test out her powers. The witch has told her there are monsters that live beyond the tower, but one day the girl decides to try and fly on her own, and she flies out past the tower and...there's nothing there.

*(beat)*

She traps the witch in the tower with her good magic. And the girl goes off on all these adventures.

(beat)

The evil witch was just lying to her the whole time.

ROSE

Petra...well, it sounds like there are some...inconsistencies with that story.

(she hears something again)

Motherfucker, it's getting closer.

(back to PETRA)

Did *he* put you up to this?

PETRA

No! No! What is - no! I've been writing it since *before* he came over! He's helping me!

ROSE

Oh, for God's sake - what would *he* know?

PETRA

He writes too!

ROSE

I'm so sure.

PETRA

What?!

ROSE

How do you know that he writes? How do you know that he's *good* at writing? A sixteen year old loser whose whippets friends skipped town and now he has nothing better to do than pretend that he's an *expert* at something.

PETRA

What are /whippets?

ROSE

What does he write - poetry about how only he knows true suffering? Bad blood allegories?

PETRA

(almost in tears)

Why are you being so mean?

(beat)

ROSE

Witches aren't always evil, you've read all about that -

PETRA

Why are you trying to rewrite my shit?

ROSE

You don't know what you're talking about - you don't know what you're doing.

PETRA

What the hell would you know, you don't write!

ROSE

Look. It's a good thing that you're trying to perfect a skill, Petra, but it's hard work. Perfecting a skill is hard, and you just can't do it all on your own. I wish you would have told me about this earlier, I could have helped you and looked at it.

PETRA

This isn't *for* you! I didn't tell you about this for a reason. I don't always have to tell you everything. You don't know everything about me. We're two completely different people. I'm a dark girl -

ROSE

*(scoffing)*

No you're not.

PETRA

How would *you* know?!

ROSE

BECAUSE YOU ARE MY DAUGHTER. Has that escaped you?! You belong to me and I belong to you!

*(beat)*

Petra. Look at me. I'm saying this because I know about these things. You're a wonderful, smart, beautiful girl, but *you don't know about these things*. You're very young. I'm sorry if that upsets you, but you have a lot to learn. Sometimes people just want to take advantage of little girls at home -

PETRA

*(brazenly)*

Where's my birth certificate?

ROSE

Excuse me?

PETRA

Does it say my name is Petronella on my birth certificate?

ROSE

*What?*

PETRA

Where is my birth certificate?!

ROSE

ENOUGH, Petra. Enough.

*(beat)*

I'm going to work. I hope you think about what we talked about. Take the day and think, and *do not* answer the door, unless it's Mrs. Harmon.

*(no answer)*

Petra? Did you hear me? You didn't listen to me yesterday.

PETRA

Whatever.

ROSE

Respect my wishes, please. Don't answer the door unless it's Mrs. Harmon.

PETRA

I'm going over to Mrs. Harmon's anyway. I told you that.

ROSE

Just don't answer the door to /that boy.

PETRA

MOM.

ROSE

Okay. I love you, baby.

PETRA

I AM NOT. YOUR BABY!

*(beat)*

ROSE

That is so sad. You used to be. I don't know what happened.

(ROSE *exits*. PETRA *waits for half a second, then runs back up to her room.*)

**NOON**

(PETRA in MRS. HARMON's garden. She bends over and pushes little seeds into the earth.)

PETRA

It's too hot.

MRS. HARMON

It'll break soon.

PETRA

How do you know? It's never been this hot in my entire life.

MRS. HARMON

It always breaks. Eventually. Don't complain. At least I'm giving you something to do. And you're not finished until you've planted every seed.

PETRA

Every single one?

MRS. HARMON

Yes, every single one! We have to make up for the damage that *horrible disgusting* boy inflicted on my beautiful garden!

(beat)

They're too close together, Petra! Good God, girl, it's like you know nothing about gardening!

PETRA

I *don't* know anything about gardening!

MRS. HARMON

Well that's not *my* fault. I'm an excellent teacher. You could have come to me any day, but *no*. Why have you never been taught anything about gardening?

PETRA

I don't know. Is it important?

MRS. HARMON

Are you insane?! It is the *most* important! You won't be living on your mother's dime forever! Do you want to pay eighty dollars for a pre-made salad, or do you want to /grow it yourself?!

PETRA

Eighty dollars? It doesn't cost /*eighty dollars* -

MRS. HARMON

It is vital - *vital* to learn how to garden.

PETRA

I guess.

*(A small pause, as PETRA continues to plant the seeds.)*

PETRA

Mrs. Harmon, where do you keep your birth certificate?

MRS. HARMON

What?

PETRA

Where do you keep your birth certificate? And like, your hospital records or whatever. Or your social security card - where do you keep all that stuff?

MRS. HARMON

Why on earth would you need to know *that*?

PETRA

Well, I can't find mine.

MRS. HARMON

Oh.

PETRA

But you know what? I found my *mom's*. It was in a folder with her name on it. And wanna hear something creepy? There was a folder with *my* name on it, except all there was in my folder was - a lock of my *hair*.

MRS. HARMON

...your hair?

PETRA

Yeah. Isn't that *disgusting*?

MRS. HARMON

Why would you need to find your birth certificate?

PETRA

Just checking something.

*(beat)*

MRS. HARMON

Did you get into a fight with your mother, Petra?

PETRA

It doesn't matter.

MRS. HARMON

Mmm.

PETRA

I said it doesn't matter!

*(beat)*

MRS. HARMON

I know it might be, ah...but she's...well, you should just respect your mother, Petra, no matter what -

PETRA

She's fucking crazy.

MRS. HARMON

Language! Oh! Language! You - you need a lesson on *etiquette*, Petronella!

PETRA

Whatever! She's fucking crazy!

*(can't hold it in any longer)*

*Why* did she name me Petronella?!

MRS. HARMON

What are you talking about?

PETRA

She lied to me about what it means, now I'm like - is it even *on* my birth certificate? Is that even my *name*?

MRS. HARMON

You're upset about your name?

PETRA

I'm not like - upset, I just - I wanna know.

MRS. HARMON

Your mother has a specific way of raising you, for specific reasons. *Specifically*, she -

PETRA

Why?! Why, though? Why does she have to do everything this special, weird way? Why can't I just have some stuff that everyone else on the planet has? Like my *birth certificate!*

MRS. HARMON

Don't be so glum! Keep planting those seeds. And don't worry about you and your mother, everything will be fine.

PETRA

She's *hiding* my birth certificate.

MRS. HARMON

You probably never even had one, Petra!

PETRA

*Everyone* has one!

MRS. HARMON

If you weren't born in a hospital, there may not have been a reason for you to have one.

PETRA

No, no, no, I've *got* to have one!

MRS. HARMON

I do not understand why this is so important to you.

PETRA

Because it's - because I don't *exist!* There's - no one knows I'm alive! It's like - if it weren't for you or Eddie, no one would *care* if I died! No one would *know!* Not anyone in town, not my father, not any kind of teacher - no one *knows* I /exist -

MRS. HARMON

(*to herself*)

Oh, your father knows.

PETRA

What?

MRS. HARMON

You need to stop griping, Petronella, it's highly unattractive. Keep planting! One of the first things you need to learn about gardening is working *with* the earth, not fighting /against it -

PETRA

What did you say?

MRS. HARMON

I said that you can't *fight* the earth's moods - if it wants to be in a drought, it'll /be in a drought -

PETRA

*(standing up)*

No, no, no. *No*, before that, what did you say before that?

MRS. HARMON

What?

PETRA

You said something about my father.

MRS. HARMON

I - no I didn't.

*(PETRA glowers a ROSE-like energy.)*

PETRA

Yes, you did. Tell me what you said about him.

MRS. HARMON

I - it wasn't anything *real* -

PETRA

What did you say?

MRS. HARMON

Nothing!

PETRA

He knows about me?

MRS. HARMON

No! Nothing! I didn't say /anything -

PETRA

You did, you did, YOU DID! YOU DID SAY IT!

*(Pause)*

MRS. HARMON

Please don't tell your mother /I said anything.

PETRA

You said it!

MRS. HARMON

ALRIGHT! I said it.

PETRA

*What* did you say?!

*(She waits with bated breath)*

MRS. HARMON

Your mother - last night she said that your father - I don't really know the details about it, Petra, I just heard her say -

PETRA

He knows about me?

MRS. HARMON

I - you'll have to ask your mother about it.

PETRA

Oh my *God!*

MRS. HARMON

Now calm down.

PETRA

FUCK!

MRS. HARMON

Petra!

PETRA

OH MY GOD!

(MRS. HARMON *watches her in horror.*)

MRS. HARMON

Ohhhhh I should not have said anything.

PETRA

Fuck, Mom! Fuck!

(*beat, to MRS. HARMON*)

Oh my *God!*

MRS. HARMON

Now - I really don't know anything, it - it may not be what you think -

PETRA

We're supposed to be honest with each other! We're supposed to tell each other things - oh my God...everything! She lied about - about EVERYTHING!

MRS. HARMON

No, not /everything!

PETRA

She lied about my NAME! She lied about my FATHER! She lies and lies and lies! They always lie - THEY ALWAYS LIE!

MRS. HARMON

Just - forget I said anything about him!

PETRA

*Everything* I have ever thought to be a law of /nature is WRONG!

MRS. HARMON

Petra, you're /being manic!

PETRA

We're different, we're *so, so* different, he said so, how could I not see it, we're *so* different! We don't *belong* to each other -

MRS. HARMON

Stop it. /Stop!

PETRA

She's going crazy! She's just fucking losing it and I'm stuck here with this liar, this freak who's lied to me my *entire* life - what if EVERYTHING, oh my GOD - I am not her baby, I AM NOT A BABY!

(MRS. HARMON *slaps* PETRA *across the face, hard*. PETRA *stops moving, stares out into space. Big pause.*)

MRS. HARMON

I - I'm sorry I had to do that, Petra, but I -

(*beat*)

You're not going to...go try and find your father, are you?

(PETRA *doesn't answer.*)

MRS. HARMON

Because...they're - they're a broken people, Petra, I *told* you that. I told you that yesterday... they're all liars.

PETRA

Yeah.

MRS. HARMON

Now...let's just...let's just settle back down and finish planting the parsley. Alright? Focus on the parsley.

(MRS. HARMON *deposits herself back by the garden. PETRA has not moved.*)

PETRA

No. I'm going to go outside. Clear my head.

MRS. HARMON

But - you're already outside!

PETRA

Well, then I'm going *inside*. It's too fucking hot out here. Not all of us can wait until it breaks.

(*She exits, leaving MRS. HARMON alone in the withering garden.*)

**AFTERNOON**

*(The living room. PETRA enters, slams the door closed. She begins to pace and turns on the radio.)*

NEWSCASTER

...we have chief meteorologist from the NOAA here today to talk about this record-defying drought -

*(PETRA shuts it off. ROSE enters. She seems surprised to see PETRA there.)*

PETRA

I thought you were at work.

ROSE

I thought you were at Mrs. Harmon's.

PETRA

I was - I left.

*(tense beat)*

Did you even make it /to work today?

ROSE

Oh, Petra, Petra, let down your hair. Why are you so insistent lately on keeping your hair up?!

PETRA

I don't care anymore.

*(ROSE hasn't heard. She goes to the front door.)*

ROSE

Help me with these, will you?

PETRA

I don't care about my hair anymore! I don't care about my hair, or - or my name, or any of that shit anymore!

*(pause)*

...Did you *hear* me?!

*(ROSE brings in grocery bags. She hands them to PETRA. They are very heavy.)*

PETRA

Jesus, what's in here?!

ROSE

Take them to the basement.

*(PETRA puts them down on the ground and begins to rifle through them.)*

PETRA

*(pulling items out)*

Spam...spam...canned yams...beans...rice...what is this?

ROSE

What does it look like?

PETRA

Fucking shit...did you even go to work?!

ROSE

PETRA?! No arguing! Not again. Take these down to the basement. NOW.

PETRA

I'm not going to do that.

ROSE

I've told you, there's a storm coming.

PETRA

It's been 95 degrees for the past *month*, we are in the middle of a drought! There's no storm!

ROSE

Petra, you are NOT LISTENING TO ME. This is not a joke! Something is coming, *I* can feel it!

*(ROSE begins taking the cans over to the basement door feverishly. Meanwhile, PETRA goes to the paper bags ROSE has just dropped and finds a butcher knife. She stares at it as ROSE runs around.)*

ROSE

I'm sorry if you're bitter because you can't anticipate it like I can, but I can't explain it! Did you even count out batteries like I asked you to?! I am trying to save our lives here, I am trying to make sure that we survive whatever comes next - do you understand that, baby? I would *die* for you, baby, I would...you have to promise me you'll stop seeing that boy. He is no good for you, he is a monster, he will ruin every/thing!

PETRA

ROSE!

ROSE

WHAT?!

PETRA

What the fuck is this?!

*(PETRA holds up the knife)*

There are like, nine more in there!

ROSE

I just told you. I am trying to save our lives, baby.

PETRA

I am NOT your BABY!

*(PETRA throws the knife on the ground.)*

ROSE

Petra, what's wrong with you?

PETRA

I know what you did. I know how you lied to me. I know your big fucking secret, Rose.

ROSE

What are you talking about?

PETRA

Cut the shit, *Rose!*

ROSE

Why do you keep calling me that?

PETRA

That's your name, isn't it?!

ROSE

Petra, I don't have time for this. *We* don't have time for this! You need to get prepared!

PETRA

Oh my God! I don't even know you! You're like this whole other person.

ROSE

I know what's happening! I know what's coming. There are dark storm clouds approaching, Petronella, and they are full of night and death, and they will upset every balance there ever was! The world will not be the same after this storm, it will be unrecognizable, cracked in half, and we are going to have to figure out a way to carry on! That means being prepared. GET PREPARED, PETRA.

PETRA

I can't believe I was so stupid.

ROSE

I am not mad at you. I will not tell you I told you so. When this happens, and you will see I was right, I will be right here, where I always was, open arms. It's just you and me, baby. It's always been you and me.

*(approaching her)*

You need to get ready, Petra -

PETRA

Get away from me.

ROSE

*(beat)*

Is this all because I call you baby? Because I can stop, you know. Whenever you say to stop, I'll stop. Because I want to listen to you, Petra, I love you so much. We're different, remember I've always said that? We're special, we're different from the rest of them. This storm wants to tear us apart, but we can't let it, Petra. This storm will bring us together. You're mine and I'm yours. Just look at our hair!

*(PETRA stares at her mother with a furious incomprehension. Without responding, she turns and walks up the stairs.)*

ROSE

If I see that boy again, I'm locking you up in your room!

*(ROSE lingers for a moment, then gathers all the groceries and brings them down into the basement.)*

**LATE AFTERNOON**

(PETRA sits with EDDIE on her bed. He reads her story.)

EDDIE

You took my suggestions.

PETRA

You were right all along. The witch was evil. I don't know why I didn't see that before.

EDDIE

What made you change your mind?

PETRA

I don't know. I only just figured it out.

EDDIE

Hey, where's your mom?

PETRA

She left. She said she had more shopping to do. She thinks the world is ending. She's fucking insane.

EDDIE

(reading)

Shit, Petra.

PETRA

What?

EDDIE

This is some dark ass shit. Darker than what you gave me to read before.

PETRA

Yeah, well. I'm a dark girl.

EDDIE

Uh. Yeah.

PETRA

Are you done?

EDDIE

Almost.

*(He finishes)*

This is...intense, Petra.

*(pause)*

You know, I like what we've done here. I like how I'm showing you the ways of the world, you know, and helping you with your writing. I like teaching you shit. I like how the girl kills the witch. It's like what I said before; when you destroy something, you change the energy of it. It's not evil, it's just physics. I don't like that when you end something, all of the sudden you're a monster.

*(PETRA begins to read through some of what he's just finished.)*

EDDIE

Have you ever felt like there was so much adrenaline in you that you just had to fuck shit up? The other night I was so mad at everyone that I just had to fuck something up. I ripped up all the plants in that old lady's garden just to fucking, you know, change the energy or something. It wasn't as satisfying as I thought it would be. I think it was because the plants were so small. I wonder how it would feel if like, I cut down a tree.

*(pause)*

Do you have any idea when your mom will be back?

PETRA

What did you say?

EDDIE

What?

PETRA

You - you ripped up Mrs. Harmon's parsley?

EDDIE

Oh! Uh -

PETRA

It's okay if you did. It's okay. I'm not going to tell her or anything. I understand. We understand each other, Eddie.

*(beat)*

You want to know something fucking crazy?

EDDIE

Uh, sure.

PETRA

Remember how I said before that I didn't have a dad? That he didn't know that I existed?

EDDIE

Yeah.

PETRA

Well, I do have one. And he fucking does know I exist.

EDDIE

Wait...really?

PETRA

And you want to know something else?

EDDIE

...Sure.

PETRA

I'm pretty sure my mother *stole me* from my dad.

EDDIE

What?

PETRA

Have you ever felt stolen? Like I know that some kids think they're adopted, but I'm talking about *stolen*. Fucking *abducted*. Mrs. Harmon let slip that my father *does* know about me, like she fucking knew that my mom had wanted to keep it such a big secret. She must have *known* that my mom had stolen me away from my dad in the dead of night. She's hiding me from him! That's why I don't go to school! It's why I've never met him before!

EDDIE

...What?

PETRA

I'm probably not even her actual child!

EDDIE

Petra...what are you talking about?

PETRA

I'm probably not her child. What if she was like, the fucking nanny who stole me away?

EDDIE

...That's...

PETRA

I know.

EDDIE

Petra, like, sorry that you're mad at your mom and everything, but just because all of the sudden you have a dad does not mean she *stole* you. I don't even really understand what she did to you. Maybe your dad was an abusive, raging alcoholic. Why are you always so mad at her?

PETRA

Why are you always defending her?

*(beat)*

At first I thought that my mother and I were exactly the same. But we're not the same at all. We're probably not even fucking related!

EDDIE

Well, you do have the same hair.

PETRA

...I guess.

*(beat)*

Eddie?

EDDIE

Yeah.

PETRA

You still haven't given me your story.

EDDIE

Oh. Yeah.

*(he shivers)*

Wow. It just got cold. Did you feel that? Wind...the heat has finally broken!

PETRA

Uh huh.

*(PETRA goes over to him. She gets on his lap.)*

EDDIE

Uh. Petra? What are you doing?

PETRA  
What does it look like?

EDDIE  
But - your mom -

PETRA  
She's not my mom. And I don't give a shit.

*(She kisses him. He responds for like a second, then pulls away.)*

EDDIE  
Uh - Petra? I don't think we should do this.

PETRA  
Why not?

*(She takes off her shirt. She tries to take off his.)*

EDDIE  
No - no, Petra, uh. I. Sorry. I'm just not like. Interested in you. That way.

PETRA  
What?

EDDIE  
Can you - can you get off me please?

*(PETRA gets off his lap. She puts her shirt back on.)*

PETRA  
Why were you always coming over here if you didn't like me?

EDDIE  
*(quickly, a lie)*  
I don't know.

PETRA  
Eddie?

EDDIE  
What?

PETRA  
You never wrote a fucking story, did you?

EDDIE  
Why are you so obsessed with my story?

PETRA  
You never wrote one, did you?

EDDIE  
Jesus.

PETRA  
Answer me.

EDDIE  
Why do you CARE?

PETRA  
ANSWER ME, EDDIE.

EDDIE  
OKAY, NO, I DIDN'T. I don't give a shit about writing. I don't *care* about any stupid story.

PETRA  
What? Then WHY were you coming over here? Why were you reading *mine*?

EDDIE  
God, you're so *stupid*!

PETRA  
What are you talking about?

EDDIE  
You haven't figured out by now that I wasn't coming over for *you*? That *you're* not the one I fucking wanted to see?

(*Beat.*)

PETRA  
(*repulsed*)  
What?!

EDDIE

*Surprise.*

PETRA

WHAT?!

EDDIE

I'm going to go. See you, Petra.

PETRA

You're a fucking liar!

EDDIE

Boo hoo.

PETRA

Oh, God, you *lied!* Why is everyone lying to me?!

EDDIE

Cry me a fucking river, Petra. Jesus Christ you are so *weird!* How did you get to be so weird? How does Rose get to be fucking kick-ass and you end up this weird, agoraphobic idiot?

PETRA

GET OUT!

EDDIE

Believe me, I'm going.

PETRA

I hate you!

EDDIE

See you later, Petrol.

*(He exits out the door. PETRA goes over to her bed where EDDIE has put down her pages.)*

PETRA

God this is so bad, this is all SO SO BAD!  
*(rips up the pages)*  
 Fuck, everything is...FUCK EVERYTHING. I hate it, I hate it, I hate it, this is the worst part, I hate it. Who told me I could do this? Who told me I could fucking do this?

*(She dissolves. Sobs. When she's had enough, she takes in deep breaths and grabs fresh pages and a pen.)*

PETRA

Fine. FINE. They all die. Everyone dies. He dies. She dies. All the trees are ripped up from the roots, and the girl stands in the middle of the tower like the epicenter of a fucking bomb while the earth is flattened because SHE'S NOT FUCKING AROUND ANYMORE.

*(A strand of PETRA's hair falls in front of her face)*

I am *not* fucking around anymore.

**LATE AFTERNOON, CONTINUED**

*(ROSE is in the living room. The radio is on. The emergency broadcast alert is on, repeating on a loop. ROSE stacks supplies high up off the floor. She counts them as she goes. The radio keeps looping.)*

ROSE

Ugh, SHUT UP!

*(ROSE throws a can of beans at the radio. It breaks. She goes back to counting.)*

ROSE

Nine boxes of rice. Thirteen cans of corn. Fourteen cans of yams. Nine knives. Condensed milk. A crow bar. A gun.

*(She pauses. She listens.)*

Oh God, oh God, oh God.

*(The wind whistles through the open window. There is distant thunder.)*

Shit.

*(EDDIE comes down the stairs. ROSE jumps up, surprised to see him.)*

ROSE

What the fuck are you doing here?

EDDIE

What?

ROSE

Why did you - were you just upstairs?

EDDIE

Yeah.

ROSE

Were you with her?

EDDIE

Yes.

ROSE

Did you touch her?

EDDIE

No!

ROSE

Did you?! Did you touch her?!

EDDIE

No, I don't want to touch her!

*(He looks at the supplies)*

I want to touch *you*.

*(ROSE stops, shocked.)*

ROSE

.../What?

EDDIE

What is this?

*(She does not answer. She stares at him.)*

Petra told me that you think the world is ending.

ROSE

No, not ending.

EDDIE

But something's coming. Right?

ROSE

*(cautious)*

You can feel it too?

EDDIE

Yeah. I can feel everything.

ROSE

It's - like big black storm clouds full of night, and they'll come and cover the earth in dark.

EDDIE

Oh. That's...what else will happen?

ROSE

The earth will break. We'll have to fend for ourselves.

EDDIE

Yeah. Yeah that's it.

*(Beat. ROSE regards EDDIE, then bursts out into laughter.)*

EDDIE

Wait - you're kidding?

ROSE

You can't feel anything!

EDDIE

What? Yes, yes, I can, I can feel it!

ROSE

*(with scorn)*

You can't feel anything, Eddie. You were raised to choke magic. Your whole purpose is to break things.

*(EDDIE does not know how he feels about this. He decides that it is awesome. He begins to approach ROSE. She doesn't move.)*

ROSE

The fuck are you doing.

EDDIE

You know what I'm doing.

ROSE

What are you doing?

EDDIE

You didn't ask me to stop.

ROSE

I asked you to get out of my house.

EDDIE

No, you didn't.

ROSE

Get out of my house.

EDDIE

You don't want that.

ROSE

Get out of my house, and stay fucking far away from my daughter.

EDDIE

She's not your daughter.

ROSE

Excuse me?

EDDIE

She's decided that she's not your daughter. I don't really know how or why.

ROSE

What?

EDDIE

Yeah. She found out her father knows about her or something, and now she thinks you stole her away from her real parents.

ROSE

WHAT?

*(Thunder gets closer.)*

Jesus.

EDDIE

It doesn't matter though. I've seen you looking at me. You're always watching me. I'm not like, going to say anything, you know. I'm almost eighteen anyway.

ROSE

No part of me wants to see your face ever again. Get out of my house.

EDDIE

...No, I saw you looking at me. I *know* you were looking at me.

*(ROSE returns to the bags, begins to move them towards the basement. EDDIE blocks her path.)*

EDDIE

You want me here!

ROSE

Get out of my way, kid!

EDDIE

You need me here!

ROSE

GET THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY, KID.

EDDIE

You're so desperate for anything to happen in your miserable life, you *need* me here!

ROSE

THAT'S IT!

EDDIE

GOD! THAT'S WHAT? Is the earth going to swallow me up?!

*(The house shakes with thunder. ROSE grabs the gun out of one of the bags, points it at him.)*

ROSE

Leave.

EDDIE

Holy shit.

ROSE

Look at me, look into my eyes. Am I fucking around?

EDDIE

Holy shit, you really are insane.

ROSE

If I find out that you hurt her, I will kill you. I would kill for that girl.

EDDIE

What the fuck is wrong with you two?!

ROSE

You need to leave, and never talk to us again.

EDDIE

Jesus! Point the gun down!

ROSE

GET OUT!

*(EDDIE advances at ROSE. They struggle. He is surprisingly strong, but ROSE is stronger. She knocks him on the ground. When he turns back to look up at her, she shoots him in the stomach. He screams out in pain. PETRA comes down the stairs, head shaven, and sees ROSE hitting EDDIE on the head with the butt of the gun. He collapses.)*

PETRA

...Mom?

*(ROSE and PETRA stare at each other. The thunder rolls in again. Now it starts to rain. Hard. The storm is getting closer. The light from outside gets darker and darker, until it is pitch-black outside.)*

PETRA

Mom...

ROSE

Oh. Oh, baby. Oh, my baby. Oh, Petra, your *hair*.

PETRA

*(in tears)*

Mom, what did you do?

ROSE

*(in tears)*

Oh, Petronella, oh my god. What did you do to your hair?

PETRA

*(crying)*

Mom, did you just do that? Mom, tell me you didn't just do that!

ROSE

Petra, he was a *horrible boy*.

PETRA

Oh my God.

*(Tornado sirens come on.)*

ROSE

Listen - Petra - we can't think about this right now -

PETRA

Get away from me. You're not my mother.

ROSE

I *am!* How could you think otherwise!

PETRA

Oh God, oh God, oh God -

ROSE

YOU NEED TO LISTEN TO ME. Forget about Eddie -

PETRA

You just killed him, you just killed him!

ROSE

He is not dead! I did not kill him! I need you to be calm for this next part!

PETRA

Oh God.

ROSE

Petra, I need you to stay focused. The storm - it's here - get your stuff, we need to go down to the basement -

PETRA

I can't, I can't go with you!

*(Intense knocks on the door. Neither PETRA nor ROSE go to answer it. A moment later, MRS. HARMON bursts in.)*

MRS. HARMON

There's going to be a tornado! A TORNADO! Let's go down to your basement!

*(she sees EDDIE)*

Oh my God! He's bleeding! What the hell happened here?!

ROSE

Petra, stay right there!

PETRA

Oh my God oh my God.

MRS. HARMON

What the hell is going on?!

ROSE

Don't you see what's happening?! Do you feel it?! The world is ending!

MRS. HARMON

It's just a storm!

ROSE

It is NOT just a storm!

MRS. HARMON

Petra, what the hell happened to this boy?!

PETRA

Mom!

*(The storm is really loud now.)*

MRS. HARMON

Did you kill him?!

ROSE

PETRA, listen to me! I know you're confused, but you have to listen to me! What have I always said?! It's you and me, baby, it's just you and me! We will figure this out! But we have to do it quickly, this house is not going to stay standing much longer! We have to go to the basement! Mrs. Harmon, let's go!

MRS. HARMON

Is he dead?

ROSE

He's not fucking dead!

*(An explosion sound.)*

PETRA

What was that?!

MRS. HARMON

Was that lightning?!

ROSE

NO - none of this is natural! Don't you understand?! Petra, Mrs. Harmon - basement! NOW!

MRS. HARMON

Are you crazy?! I need to get this boy to a hospital!

*(MRS. HARMON goes to pick up EDDIE. He's too heavy for her.)*

ROSE

You can't go back out there, it's too dark! Look! There's *nothing* out there! It's all gone!

*(She points out the window. It is pitch black. Hail pounds against the side of the house. Everyone has to scream in order to hear each other.)*

ROSE

Petra! Get over here!

MRS. HARMON

*(shaking EDDIE)*

Get up, get up, get up!

ROSE

Petra, NOW!

*(PETRA deliberates for a moment, then goes to her mother's side. MRS. HARMON succeeds in rousing EDDIE. She helps him to his feet. He is crying.)*

ROSE

Do not go out there, Mrs. Harmon!

MRS. HARMON

This boy needs to be taken to the hospital!

ROSE

Are you insane?! You can't go out there!

MRS. HARMON

We're going!

(MRS. HARMON *leaves out the front door. It bangs against the side of the house. PETRA goes to the doorway and ROSE tries to close the door, but the wind is too strong.*)

PETRA

Wait! Wait! Eddie! MRS. HARMON!

(*A huge explosion sound.*)

ROSE

Petra, they're gone! Did you hear that? They're dead! They're gone! Listen to me, now, help me with this!

(*PETRA helps ROSE close the door.*)

Let's go!

PETRA

My - my stuff!

ROSE

There's no time! Come *on!*

(*An enormous explosion. All of the lights go out. PETRA screams. The storm rages on. The sirens stop.*)

PETRA

Mom!

ROSE

I'm here!

**FOREVER AFTER**

*(The sounds of the storm. PETRA and ROSE are in the basement. The house has fallen down above them. ROSE is counting supplies.)*

ROSE

Nine boxes of rice. Thirteen cans of corn. Fourteen cans of yams. Nine knives. Condensed milk. A crow bar. A gun.

*(Pause.)*

Keep going, baby.

PETRA

Uhhh...okay...

*(continuing)*

Well, I didn't really write in the boy very well. He sort of came in the middle. It was clumsy writing. It was bad. He was the one who pointed out to her that the witch was keeping her locked in that tower for a reason, and it wasn't because of the danger.

*(beat)*

Eventually, she got mad. She got really mad and tore the world apart.

ROSE

Nine knives. Two barbecue skewers. One skillet. A gun. A crowbar.

*(pause)*

Keep going, baby, I'm listening.

PETRA

I don't like this anymore. I can't remember.

ROSE

No, keep trying, Petra. You have to get the story right. We will figure this out.

PETRA

I really hate it. It's all wrong. All the details, all the logic. It's in my head but I wrote it down wrong. And now it's all gone and I can't fix it.

ROSE

It's not all gone, and you *can* fix it. What would you change if you could?

PETRA

This fucking storm.

*(A scary, unnatural sound. PETRA, frightened, jumps, and crawls into her mother's lap.)*

ROSE

Wait, shh. Listen.

*(The storm stops completely.)*

PETRA

Oh thank God.

ROSE

See? What did I tell you. It's okay, baby.

*(she wraps her arms around her)*

It's just you and me.

*(she runs her hand over PETRA's hair)*

One day, it'll grow back. It'll all grow back.

**END**