

30 Pieces

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FINAL PRE-REHEARSAL DRAFT

A short one-act play by:

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c. 2005

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(A crossroads in the south. EDDIE enters with a guitar case.)

EDDIE
You're sure this is it?

(MICK enters.)

MICK
That's what the old guy said. This is the place.

EDDIE
Great

MICK
Come on! Where's the excitement? It happened *right here!*

EDDIE
Whoop-de-do.

MICK
Where is your sense of adventure?

EDDIE
I think it fell out of the car in Missouri.

MICK
Christ, I've been listening to you bitch all the way here! Let's just drink in the vibes of the most unholy of holy places.

EDDIE
Right. This is where it happened.

MICK
That's what the man said.

EDDIE
Christ, how did I get talked into this? Mick, that guy would've told you anything, so long as you kept buying him drinks.

MICK
It was perfect. Old, drunk, black dude in a Mississippi roadhouse telling us where the crossroads were. You can't mess with that kind of kismet.

(Eddie stares at him.)

MICK (Continued)
Eddie, it happened right here!

EDDIE
What, exactly, do you expect to happen?

MICK
Satan to appear and offer us musical genius, fame and fortune
for our souls.

EDDIE
Yeah. Have you read Milton?

MICK
Who?

EDDIE
Hell isn't exactly Jamaica.

MICK
How do you know? It could be a *hell* of a lot of fun!

EDDIE
Well, we're here. Now what?

(Mick opens his bag, and pulls out
two cans of beer.)

MICK
Have a couple of cold ones, and wait for the master of the
underworld to appear.

EDDIE
Fuck, I forgot my Ouija board.

MICK
Cynic.

(Mick checks his watch.)

MICK (Continued)
Getting close

EDDIE
What?

MICK
Nothing.

(Mick looks at his watch again.)

MICK (Continued)
Hey, man...Play something.

EDDIE
Why?

It'd be cool.

MICK

"Cool"?

EDDIE

Yeah.

MICK

Two years of "You fuckin' suck." Now it's "cool?"

EDDIE

Man, we are at the crossroads!

MICK

Play it yourself.

EDDIE

Jesus! The crossroads! All you have to do is play. Have you no respect for history?

MICK

History, yes. It's you I have no respect for.

EDDIE

It's no wonder we're on the ass end of the music industry.

MICK

Bullshit. Respecting you doesn't have anything to do with our tour of bible belt Holiday Inn lounges.

EDDIE

You don't think I pull my share?

MICK

Oh, sure, you're a master at bumming cigarettes. Oh, wait, that's *from us*, not *for us*.

EDDIE

That's not...

MICK

Have you ever bought a pack of cigarettes?

EDDIE

You are such a buzzkill. You wonder why the band is going nowhere fast? You can't blame me. You need to cut loose, man. It's *rock and roll*, my friend. Live fast, die young, beautiful corpse, all that shit! Embrace the debauchery! *Embrace it!*

MICK

EDDIE
I just want to play, Mick. Just play.

MICK
Then play, man!

EDDIE
That's what I do.

MICK
Really? You think so? I think you look bored as hell over there stage right. I think that, Eddie, and so does the audience.

EDDIE
It's called focus, trying to take some pride it doing the damn job well, instead of just scoring with the blond at the bar.

MICK
It's not sexy, not sexy at all. Why do people come to a rock show? To get off. To look up at the gods of rock...Why in the name of God did you join this band?

EDDIE
To play music.

MICK
Wrong! *To get laid.*

EDDIE
Oh, was that it?

MICK
That's why they come to a rock show, to look up at the stage and dream about banging the crap out of a rock god!

EDDIE
Oh, I get it, *that's* why you've been to the clinic, stocking up on anitbiotics, four times in six months?

MICK
Three times.

EDDIE
That's attractive, yeah. The inability to piss straight is a huge turn-on. I think Miss September listed it.

MICK
Do not mock my lifestyle, Edward! Just because you can't get laid...

EDDIE
Lifestyle? Passing out in a rest stop bathroom is a
lifestyle?

(Beat)

MICK
Why have you always been such a dick?

EDDIE
That's bullshit and you know it. We started playing together
to *play!* It wasn't about contracts and demos and all that
shit. It was the joy of the music.

MICK
That's not enough anymore.

EDDIE
Obviously. You've made every effort to prove that you are
the "frontman," the center of the universe, and you're more
than willing to kick Sid, Carmine or myself right to the curb
for it.

MICK
Just because you're willing to stagnate doesn't mean I'm
going to allow myself to be sucked down with you.

EDDIE
Stagnate? I love what I do, flat out *love it.* I'd do it for
free. I give my blood and sweat to it. Yet, when it's time
to actually work on something, you're nowhere to be found.
You can prance around like an idiot, but I'm still the one
sitting down and banging out songs.

MICK
Maybe I'd want to rehearse more if the music wasn't boring.

EDDIE
Are you worried you're not gonna be a star? A "rock god?"
I've got news for you, "David Lee," the window for you and I
to be rock stars is closing rapidly, if it hasn't already
slammed shut. We are a *bar band*, nothing more. Reality
needs to set in with you.

(Beat)

MICK
Reality?

EDDIE
That's what I said.

MICK
I'm supposed to stick to reality?

EDDIE
Is there an echo out here?

MICK
Fine. From now on, it's reality central...

EDDIE
Great.

MICK
But... You gotta pull that thing out and play.

EDDIE
Christ.

MICK
Trust me, if it works, he's got very little to do with it.

(Beat.)

MICK (Continued)
Come on, indulge me for one last night, and starting next week I will be at every rehearsal. Hell, I'll be early.

EDDIE
How come I'm finding it real hard to believe this promise I've heard you make a few dozen times before?

MICK
I swear.

(Beat)

MICK (Continued)
I've just made a vow, here, and you question me.

EDDIE
This from a man who bragged about lying in confession?

MICK
Jesus, man, what's it going to hurt? You play for a few minutes, and we get out of here. If I screw up later, you can give me the boot.

EDDIE
Fine.

(He sits and opens his guitar case,
removing a acoustic guitar.)

(He strums, executes a few runs along the neck. Clearly, he is competent. Mick sits, lights a cigarette and pops a beer. Eddie begins to play, something simple, a blues riff.)

MICK
That's nice, man. What is it.

EDDIE
It's the new one we were working on, the one you never showed up to rehearse.

MICK
Cool.

(Mick hums along, building a melody over the progression.)

MICK (Continued)
Play it faster.

EDDIE
It's blues, not thrash.

MICK
It's booring like that.

EDDIE
Not to me.

MICK
Christ, you never listen to me.

(Eddie stops playing.)

EDDIE
You ought to come to rehearsal.

MICK
Oh, so I waive my right to have an opinion?

EDDIE
That's about it.

MICK
This is exactly what I've been talking about!

(An older man, in a dark suit that is clearly out of fashion, steps into the light. He is BELLS.)

BELLS
You boys need to hold it down.

MICK
Holy shit!

BELLS
Y'all could wake the dead. Cryin' and caterwauling' out here.

MICK
You scared the piss out of me!

BELLS
Get over it, sonny. There's worse things out here than old men like me.

EDDIE
I'm sorry. I'll put it away.

BELLS
It ain't the guitar. That was soundin' real nice.

EDDIE
Thanks.

BELLS
It's the truth, no need to thank me

MICK
What the hell are you wondering around out here for, anyway.

(Mick cracks the last beer.)

BELLS
I live out here.

MICK
What, out here at the crossroads?

BELLS
Are you an idiot, boy? I got a shack over the rise.

EDDIE
How'd you hear us out here?

BELLS
Sound travels a long way out here, boys.

(He eyes Mick's beer.)

BELLS (Continued)
Got another one of those for an old man?

MICK
In the car.

BELLS
Why don't you run an get me one.

MICK
What?

BELLS
Why don't you run along and get me one.

(Mick seems confused for a moment.)

MICK
Yeah, sure.

(He exits.)

BELLS
Pretty boy, but he ain't got the brains the lord laid on a dog.

(He looks at Eddie.)

BELLS (Continued)
You're the smart one, ain't ya?

EDDIE
I suppose so.

(He holds out the guitar.)

EDDIE (Continued)
You gonna tune it?

(Bells takes the instrument,
inspects it.)

BELLS
I don't think so.

EDDIE
You did it for Johnson.

BELLS
I did, but, you see, Robert Johnson couldn't play for shit when I found him sitting here. Goddamn infant on the guitar, is what he was. Johnson didn't give a shit about the music. He was looking for booze and girls. That's all a man wants, he'll sign anything to get it. You, boy, ain't got that problem.

EDDIE

I don't?

BELLS

Naw. You got the music. You just gotta keep it pure. It ain't about money and power, that'll come when you put your heart and fire into it, if you keep it pure. Sometimes, though, you gotta scrape loose a few barnacles. They slow you down, suck that purity out of you.

(Eddie looks after Mick)

EDDIE

Really.

BELLS

That, however, is a problem I can solve just as easily as I solved Robert's. Probably even moreso.

EDDIE

I see.

BELLS

All you got to do is walk away.

EDDIE

You just let me go? You're not as greedy as they say, if that's the case.

BELLS

I've already had a few meals tonight, and I'm a bit worn out. Let's just say I don't want to have to work so hard.

(Eddie smiles. It's not evil, just that he recognizes the truth of Bells' statement.)

BELLS (Continued)

Go on. Don't worry about Mick, he'll be getting what he thinks he deserves, and what he *does* deserve.

(Beat.)

BELLS (Continued)

Go on. I might just have to change my mind.

(Eddie exits. Mick returns with a six-pack.)

MICK

Here's your beer, old man. Where's Eddie?

BELLS

Who cares? Dead weight like that, well, it's just holding you back. You're the star.

MICK

Is it that obvious?

BELLS

Of course it is.