

TIGRESS

By
L. Jay Edenmeyer

TIGRESS

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TIGRESS

for Scotty

TIGRESS

TIGRESS was originally produced in Houston, TX by The Longhorn Players, with Charis Christy as Stage Manager, featuring the following cast (in order of appearance):

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Ilona Jó | Lindsie McNair | Katarína (Kat) Benická | Katriana Nossa |
| János Újváry | Declan Dea | Gyorgy Thurzo | Eric May |
| Anna Darvulia | Emma Glose | István Magyarai | Jack Greene |
| P'al Nádasdy | Ethan Brandt | Ursula | Karson Weigl |
| Elizabeth Bathory | Bailor Erdeljac | Pola | Sierra Rozen |
| Dorotya (Dorka) Semtész ... | Rebecca Mullen | Judit | Denise Marin |
| Zsuzsanna | Haley Keating | Zsofia | Emma Bolduc |
| Flicka | Julia Vivas | | |

CAST: (10W, 6M, 1GN)

Female

Elizabeth Bathory (50) – Hungarian Nobility – Wealthiest
Anna Darvulia (40s) – Advisor to Bathory
Dorotya (Dorka) Semtész (40s) – Mother to Zsuzsanna
Ilona Jó (50's) – Bathory Court; nurse to Bathory; wetnurse to her children
Katarína Benická (late teens) – Bathory Court
Zsuzsanna (early teens) – Daughter of Dorka
Pola (early teens) – Servant to Bathory
Judit (early teens) – Servant to Bathory
Zsofia (early teens) – Istvan's daughter
Ursula (20s) – Servant to Gyorgy

Male

Gyorgy Thurzo (60s) – Bathory entrusted in his care by her Ferenc; Cousin by marriage
István Magyarai (40s) – Lutheran minister; father to Zsofia
P'al Nadasdy (20s) – Son of Bathory
János Újváry – Servant to Bathory
Ferenc Nádasdy (49) – Husband of Bathory
Jakob (40s) – Husband of Dorka, Father of Zsuzsanna

Gender Neutral

Flicka (60s) – Servant of Bathory

Time: 1610

Place: Castle Cachtice, Hungary

Epilogue – Translations, pronunciations, and historical character information.

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PROLOGUE

The stage is dark. We see no light whatsoever and the only sound we hear is the slow dripping of water...as a desolate drop in a deep cavern. The slow drops escalate slightly until we hear the whimpering of a young girl. Forlorn and lost, it is the sound of desperation and fear. The drips continue, as does the whimpering. Slowly, these begin to increase in tempo. As they reach a bit of a faster pace, there is the sound of a very heavy, very solid door sliding across stone as it opens. There is a quick intake of breath from the young girl. Then silence. The dripping resumes its slow, methodic rhythm. Steps begin to sound – descending down stone stairs. After 3 or 4 steps, the whimpering begins again. It slowly crescendos as the steps increase in speed. The whimpering becomes pleas of “No”. We hear the creak of iron hinges followed by a bloodcurdling scream. Then silence. And the slow drip of condensation into a puddle on the floor.

SCENE 1

In the black, we hear strong cello music. Should have a rock feel (think THUNDERSTRUCK). On the beats of the cello, we see flashes of silhouette. Stark shapes and montages of various tableaux. As the music fades, Lights rise on the grand hall of the Castle Cachtice. There is much laughter. ELIZABETH is seated on a great throne in the room. P’AL, her son, is seated at her feet, head in her lap as she strokes his hair. ANNA, ILLONA, and JANOS are seated around the room, drinking, and languid as they taunt KATARINA, who cannot be seen. We hear the struggles of what sounds like two women wrestling.

ILLONA. If you can’t be more devoted than that Katarina, how can you ever expect to join us in the real games!

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JANOS. Come on, Kat! Don't let her gain control.

ANNA. *(To Elisabeth.)* I don't know how you expect she will ever be of any benefit. She has no resolve.

P'AL. *(Without lifting his head.)* Give her time, Neni, she just started.

JANOS. She will come around. She just needs to get a taste for it.

ANNA. Which is rarely, if ever, developed. One has it or they don't.

JANOS. Illona didn't.

ILLONA. Keep my name from your lips. You can't know me.

JANOS. But I know your tears with your first loss.

ILLONA. The loss was yours. As were the tears.

ANNA. Enough. This is about neither of you. Imbecility knows no victory.

P'AL. I think she looks good.

ILLONA. *(Kneeling beside him.)* Does P'al see something he likes?

ELIZABETH. Leave him.

P'AL. There is strength in her.

ILLONA. And P'al likes that?

JANOS. *(Warning)* Illona...

P'AL. She's pretty.

ILLONA. Very.

ANNA. Girl....

P'AL. Maybe when she proves she can....

ILLONA. Proves what?

P'AL. That she's good enough.

ILLONA. For P'al? Will anyone ever be good enough for little...

ELIZABETH. *(Without a change of expression, or looking away from offstage, removes her hand from P'al's head and violently slaps Illona.)* I said leave him. *(Illona is stunned, but bites back her tears. Janos comes over and quietly takes her by the hand and leads her away as:)*

SCENE 2

Lights come up on DOROTYA and ZSUZANNA. Sitting in what is, clearly, the main room of their cottage, Dorotya is braiding Zsuzanna's hair.

ZSUZANNA. Ow! You're hurting me.

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DOROTYA. (*Laughing.*) So sensitive!

ZSUZSANNA. (*Protests, but joins the fun.*) But you're hurting me!

DOROTYA. You'd think you were a man the way you whine.

ZSUZSANNA. Father never whined.

DOROTYA. Little you know. That man would whine like a woman in the pains when the kettle threw a grease spot. Never you mind that. Pull yourself up. You need to get prepared. It's not every girl honored as you are today.

ZSUZSANNA. What if she doesn't like me?

DOROTYA. That's not your concern. Her liking you matters not in either direction. What matters is you do as you're told and not get into the cabinets or join in the kitchen gossip.

ZSUZSANNA. But, where else will I learn.

DOROTYA. Keep your eyes to the hateur. That's your only concern.

ZSUZSANNA. I hate the smell of burning meat.

DOROTYA. A good hateur doesn't burn the meat.

ZSUZSANNA. (*Giggling.*) Oh, so not like here at home.

DOROTYA. Oh! (*A gentle smack.*) So, you'd rather work with the potier and have scalded, wrinkled hands?

ZSUZSANNA. Only fun, ma! I LOVE the way you burn meat!

DOROTYA. As you should! Not all girls get this chance, ya hear? So, I expect the best from ya.

ZSUZSANNA. (*With some concern.*) But....ma?

DOROTYA. What, girl?

ZSUZSANNA. (*Hesitating.*)....I...

DOROTYA. Speak if you have words.

ZSUZSANNA. Piroska says....(*halts.*)

DOROTYA. Girl! Spit!

ZSUZSANNA. I'm going to miss you.

DOROTYA. What are you on about?

ZSUZSANNA. Piroska says Judit never comes home anymore and that her ma can't talk to her and...

DOROTYA. (*Interrupting – laughter.*) Lord, girl! Is that your trouble?

ZSUZSANNA. Yes! I don't want to be gone and not...

DOROTYA. Something as small doesn't matter.

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ZSUZSANNA. But Ma....

DOROTYA. Zsuzsanna, listen. There will be nothing for you better than this. Too little out there for a woman in this world. You take the scraps and thank 'em for the feast.

ZSUZSANNA. But....

DOROTYA. None!

SZUNZSANNA. I don't....

DOROTYA. Enough. You're my own and I'd never leave you for want. But it's time. Ya have only yourself now and the hopes of a stable lad or, gods be your guide, a butler. Take the course you're offered and be happy of the way. (*Silence as she looks on her.*)

SZUZSANNA. (*Finally.*) Is that what you did?

DOROTYA. Always on about that man.

SZUZSANNA. I miss him.

DOROTYA. Esküszöm! You certainly took after him with the weepin.

SZUZSANNA. He couldn't help it. I was his apple.

DOROTYA. And the man couldn't tell sweet from sour. Now, through the door with ya. (*Lights out and return to:*)

SCENE 3

Elizabeth seated on her throne in the room. P'al, Anna, Illona, and Janos are where we last saw them, watching the fight taking place off-stage.

ANNA. What say you on her?

ELIZABETH. You can't deny her want.

ANNA. Sometimes the want is greater than the will.

ELIZABETH. Anna. You are very fond of your own thought.

ANNA. Meaning?

ELIZABETH. At times it seems your desire for meaning is overrun by your desire to confound.

ANNA. (*Enjoys this.*) Sometimes, they are the same.

FLICKA. (*Entering from the outer foyer on the other side of the activities being watched.*) Countess, she has arrived.

ELIZABETH. Qui vult videre me?

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FLICKA. ... Grace...I don't....

ANNA. (*Laughs.*) Elizabeth, you know (s)he doesn't speak Latin.

ELIZABETH. There is little in the way of fun. Who is this "she"?

FLICKA. The new servant, Lady.

ANNA. Zsuzsanna

ELIZABETH. Yes. I recall now.

P'AL. But, we don't know about Kat, yet.

ELIZABETH. My young one. Trust. There is room for all. Provided they are willing to fit.

ANNA. (*To Flicka.*) Bring her in.

JANOS. Should we do something about....

ANNA. (*a thought.*) Ah. Yes. (*To the women offstage.*) Silence! Keep to yourselves until we have greeted our new arrival. (*To unseen young woman.*) And, you! Honor Her Lady or your family will be the worse.

ELIZABETH. Easy Anna. "Silence" really was all that was needed.

Before Flicka returns, all present, save Elizabeth and P'al pull the hoods of their robes over their heads. The cowls hide the features of their faces. Flicka returns to the room with Zsuzsanna behind. She is nervous, but courteous. While we become aware she can see what has been happening offstage, we cannot determine she can make out the exact nature of the activity. When Flicka stops, she goes into a deep curtsy, and holds it until she is given leave to rise.

FLICKA. Your Grace, may I present to you, Zsuzsanna?

ZSUZSANNA. My Lady.

ELIZABETH. Wie alt bist du, Mädchen?

ZSUZSANNA. Fifteen, your Grace.

ELIZABETH. (*Pleased.*) Sprechen Sie Deutsch?

ZSUZSANNA. No, Lady, but I understand it. My father was German.

ELIZABETH. And where is he now?

ZSUZSANNA. He's....

ELIZABETH. Oh! Where is my head? Rise.

ZSUZSANNA. Yes, Lady.

P'AL. Where is your father?

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ZSUZSANNA. Dead.

P'AL. Mine, too.

ZSUZSANNA. I know, my Lord. I am sorry for it.

P'AL. What happened?

ZSUZANNA. He was part of your father's guard. When they went....

FERENC. (*a voice from off – one only heard by Elizabeth.*) Erzbeth!

ELIZABETH. (*To voice.*) A moment, my love.

ZSUZSANNA. Pardon, M'Lady?

P'AL. Mama?

ELIZABETH. (*Present.*) Yes?

P'AL. Was it to me you spoke?

ELIZABETH. Wem sprichst du?

P'AL. To you. I am only speaking to you.

ELIZABETH. Sprich nicht, als wäre ich deine Hure.

P'AL. (*Shocked.*) I only mean you have exited our presence and....(*he continues to speak, though we hear nothing over...*)

FERENC. (*Even more emphatic.*) Erzbeth?! Love? I need you!

ELIZABETH. Ferenc?

P'AL. No, Mama. It's me, P'al.

ELIZABETH. (*Slowly out of a fog.*) Of course. Of course, my love. It must be you.

ZSUZSANNA. My apologies, Lady. I had no intention of upsetting....

ELIZABETH. Of course, child. But you must be ready to see your room. Flicka, show the young woman to her quarters. We will find time for... feinheiten at another meeting. For now, you must settle and begin your training.

ZSUZSANNA. Yes, my Lady. Thank you for the opportunity of....

ELIZABETH. Yes, another time. (*Impatient gesture*) Flicka?

FLICKA. Of course. This way, child.

ELIZABETH. And Flicka? Another stump on the fire.

FLICKA. Yes, Grace.

ELIZABETH. I abhor the cold. (*They Exit. The others remove their hoods.*)

ANNA. Lovely young woman.

P'AL. Yes, she was.

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ELIZABETH. (*Guarded.*) Did you really think so, P'al?

P'AL. Yes, mother.

JANOS. As pretty as Kat?

ANNA. Ah, yes! (*To the offstage women.*) Continue! (*Screams and aggression heard offstage.*)

ELIZABETH. That will, likely, depend on the outcome of this.

ILLONA. (*Still a little leery.*) True, Lady.

ANNA. Sometimes the dispute ends in victory for the spirit, but, defeat for vanity.

P'AL. (*Suddenly concerned – moving toward the offstage struggle.*) Kat?

ANNA. Boy! Beware.

ELIZABETH. To me, little one.

P'AL. But, Mama, I

ELIZABETH. No! (*She is cut short by a sharp scream that comes from the direction of the fight. She barely registers this occurrence. P'al rushes in the direction of the scream. The others simply turn in that direction.*)

P'AL. (*Frozen, staring.*) Kat? (*From off-stage, Katarina enters. She is dressed in a simple white shift. Pieces of it have been ripped. There is a long streak of*

blood down the front of it. There is also blood on her face and down her neck. She seems transfixed on something other.) Kat? Can you see me?

Are you....?

KAT. Yes.

ANNA. Well done.

KAT. Is it done?

JANOS. Yes. You did very well.

KAT. Did I?

ILLONA. Yes.

KAT. (*Walking up to Elizabeth and kneeling.*) Did I serve well?

ELIZABETH. (*Caressing her head and then resting her hand on her shoulder.*) Exceedingly. I am very proud. (*Elizabeth rises. The others all kneel. She bends over and lifts Katarina to her feet. She lifts her chin and looks deeply into her eyes.*) Very proud. Come. It is time to clean you up.

JANOS. My Lady. (*Gesturing offstage to where the fight took place.*)

Where shall I...?

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ELIZABETH. (*Dismissive,*) With the others. I need to get Katarina settled into her new quarters.

KAT. New quarters?

ELIZABETH. Victors are deserving of so much more.

KAT. Thank you, your Grace. I want only to serve.

ELIZABETH. (*Lovingly wiping the blood from her lip and chin.*) And so you have. Exceptionally well. (*She leads Kat off stage. She is feeling the texture of the blood in her fingers. And, it is possible, we see her begin to rub her fingers on her cheeks. As they exit, we see Illona sit at the feet of the throne, a bit relieved, though still with fear. Janos and P'al begin to walk off toward the area of the fight.*)

ANNA. P'al, get the feet.

P'AL. (*Quietly to her.*) She speaks, again, of Papa. Why does she think I'm...

ANNA. (*Quietly in return.*) The resemblance is strong and your delay is drawing attention.

P'AL. I only.....

ANNA. Need do as you are instructed. The feet. Now! Illona? Up, girl! Be sure to leave no spill. Quickly. It is almost time for dinner. (*The lights fade.*)

SCENE 4

Light up on a study. A man, GYORGY (pronounced Yor – Hungarian for George) is pacing, reading through a register. He stops, contemplates something he is reading and crosses to his desk. He sits and begins writing. After a time, ISTVAN (a Lutheran Minister) enters, clearly frantic and a bit insistent.

ISTVAN. Palatine, forgive me, but.....

GYORGY. (*Raises one finger in the air to silence his visitor. Istvan stops, and, rather impatiently, waits for him to find a stopping point in his interaction. Having found a place to stop and giving Istvan his partial, if annoyed, attention*) Yes?

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ISTVAN. Forgive me, Lord. I have tried to be patient, in the face of....

GYORGY. Forgive ME, I believe you have been anything BUT. The day doesn't pass that you aren't at my door, and, even considering your predicament, there is little to your plight that hasn't interfered with every aspect of my business.

ISTVAN. My plight? Truly, your Lordship, I am at a loss as to how you define my "plight". Would you consider your daughter a mere.....

GYORGY. (*Placating.*) My words were...

ISTVAN. Callous? Ill-thought? Or simply the coldness of a childless man?

GYORGY. (*Containing his frustration – trying to find patience.*) I will say harsh. My focus on other business should, in no way, detract from your concern. I was trying to....it makes no difference. (*He ceases his work, puts down his tools.*) Ursula!

URSULA. (*A young servant girl enters the chamber*) Excellence?

GYORGY. (*Handing her the letter.*) Deliver this. At once.

URSULA. (*Curtsy*) Yes, Grace. (*She exits*)

GYORGY. (*Crossing to Istvan*) Now, what can I do? How do you need me this day?

ISTVAN. My needs have not changed. I have not had a visit from my daughter in weeks. And every attempt to see her is met with a servant at the entrance and a door in my face.

GYORGY. Perhaps they are telling you she is no longer in residence.

ISTVAN. And, where else would she be?

GYORGY. Yet, if they are clear she...

ISTVAN. What else would they say?

GYORGY. What reason would they have to deceive you? (*Istvan is suddenly reluctant to speak.*) (*Sensing this.*) I assure you no one is present. If you truly have some understanding of where....

ISTVAN. No understanding, Lord. Just, a feeling.

GYORGY. A feeling?

ISTVAN. Of...something...not right.

GYORGY. A feeling.

ISTVAN. That can be enough!

GYORGY. Father,....

ISTVAN. Precisely! Which you, very clearly, are not! (*Gyorgy finds his*

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way to not respond. Merely holds his reserve, staring.) Forgive me.

GYORGY. A second time. *(The two men consider each other for a moment)* Continue.

ISTVAN. I only meant you to understand my fears.

GYORGY. You may not believe me, but, I understand, fully, your concern.

ISTVAN. I thought you had no children.

GYORGY. *(Directed, but not aggressive.)* Clearly. Perception is not as simple as is comfortable. Now, please, to your point.

ISTVAN. My daughter...is missing.

GYORGY. Then, perhaps, we should find her. *(The lights fade on the study.)*

SCENE 5

Lights rise on the bed chamber of Bathory's servant girls; Zsuzsanna, POLA, JUDIT, ZSOFIA. They are teasing and playing, with one exception - Zsofia is lying down, her back facing out, not participating in any way.

POLA. You might want to be careful. If Illona finds out...

JUDIT. What? She hates him.

ZSUZSANNA. I don't think so.

JUDIT. What you know?! The fire's bare cold since ya first night.

ZSUZSANNA. All I mean is, she watches him when he isn't looking.

JUDIT. To glare.

POLA. Don't be stupid, Judit!

JUDIT. Takin' her side, Pola?

POLA. I'm taking yours! You don't want Illona mad!

JUDIT. Why'd she care? She allus talks about how much she hates Janos!

ZSUZSANNA. And my tresses were pulled on more than one occasion by the adolescent boy with no place to put his interests. *(Judit and Pola look at her, then begin laughing all at once.)* What?

POLA. *(Laughing.)* His interests!

JUDIT. Ain't you the haughty miss!?

ZSUZSANNA. *(Embarrassed but gets the humor.)* I mean only – just because someone glares, doesn't mean it is out of disinterest.

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POLA. And where'd we learn such fine speech?

JUDIT. Her father.

POLA. Philosopher, was he?

ZSUZSANNA. No. He just believed that well-spoken was a sign of thoughtfulness.

JUDIT. She allus spoke that way. Even when sis and me met the urchin in the streets!

ZSUZSANNA. (*Laughing.*) Stop it! And Piroska misses you. She said she never hears from you anymore.

JUDIT. (*Caught off guard.*) Nothin' ta speak.

POLA. (*Changing subject.*) Unlike you. Such a talker.

JUDIT. (*Jumping back in.*) Fat lot that'll do ya in the kitchen.

POLA. But, it's safer there.

ZSUZSANNA. (*Pause*) What do you mean?

POLA. Well, ask Zsofia what.....

JUDIT. (*Interrupting.*) Just that it's better than emptyin chamber pots!
(*She gives a side glance to Pola.*)

ZSUZSANNA. Ask Zsofia what?

POLA. It's just.....

JUDIT. Pola, don't.

POLA. What does it matter? She's here now.

JUDIT. That don't mean it's safe to....

ZSUZSANNA. Tell me!

POLA. (*The other girls Shares a look with Judit. Then, giving in*) This isn't the easiest place for us.

ZSUZSANNA. It's never easy for servants. But, I imagine, you make the most.

JUDIT. Not servants. Women.

POLA. Ha! You're a girl.

JUDIT. Kuss!

ZSUZSANNA. What does bein' a girl have to do with anything?

JUDIT. It's difficult here.

ZSUZSANNA. I would think it would be easier. I mean, with Lady Bathory in charge. And her court.

POLA. And her son....

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ZSUZSANNA. What of him?

JUDIT. Did ya see the look of him?

ZSUZSANNA. (*Coy.*) Yes.

POLA. Zzuzsanna, no!

ZSUZSANNA. What?

POLA. You well know what! Don't fall for that!

JUDIT. There's no good there.

ZSUZSANNA. You don't think he's handsome?

JUDIT. As the devil, hisself.

POLA. It's easy. He looks at you like that and you think....

JUDIT. But don't. Don't believe it.

ZSUZSANNA. What are you talking about?

POLA. It's not safe to....

JUDIT. Believe us, it's better to stay in the kitchen.

ZSUZSANNA. You're not making sense. Better than what?!

ZSOFIA. (*Without turning. A shriek.*) STOP! (*The girls freeze. Zsofia has not even stirred since they have been talking. They are startled and unsure. She sits up and turns around. There is a large bruise on her face. Her eye is swollen shut. There is, what are, clearly, teeth marks on her neck.*)

ZSUZSANNA. (*Just above a whisper.*) Sweet Father. What happened to you?

JUDIT. Zsozso, don't.

ZSOFIA. What? Warn her?

POLA. Zsofia, it's better not to talk on it.

ZSOFIA. Look at me? What are they going to do? (*Humorless laugh.*) Hurt me?

POLA. Don't ask such things.

ZSUZSANNA. Wha...? What happened?

POLA. Come Zsuzsanna, let's ready for bed.

ZSUZSANNA. I don't want to go to bed.

POLA. I won't stay here.

ZSUZSANNA. Why not?

JUDIT. It's not safe.

ZSOFIA. You can't protect her.

ZSUZSANNA. From what?

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JUDIT. Pola, take her out.

ZSOFIA & ZSUZSANNA. No!

ZSUZSANNA. I want to know what's going on.

POLA. No, Zsuzsanna, you don't.

ZSOFIA. Why? She'll know soon enough.

JUDIT. Zsozso, let her be.

ZSOFIA. (*Laughs.*) HE won't.

ZSUZSANNA. Who?

POLA. (*Trying to force her out of room*) No more!

SZOFIA. Your baratja.

ZSUZSANNA. My what?

SZOFIA. (*Begins to move around, eventually blocking her exit from the room.*) What would you call it? Man is too strong a word. So, boy.

Boy...friend. Boyfriend.

ZSUZSANNA. I don't know what you mean?

ZSOFIA. Don't? Or don't want to? (*Mocking*) "You don't think he's handsome?"

ZSUZSANNA. P'al?

POLA. Please, Zsuzsanna, let's go to our quarters.

ZSOFIA. Surprised? I know. I was. So charming. Such a warm smile. And those eyes. Who could see anything but beauty in the depths of those eyes? Brown....and gold. And so much life and...innocence in those beautiful orbs. Until there was nothing. I know you won't believe it, but, so many times, there was.....nothing. Just an emptiness. Almost like there was another world and he had found a way there. Have you seen that, yet? When he lets himself into your quarters? Have you seen....

JUDIT. Zsozso!

ZSOFIA. Too much? Are you afraid of what she might hear? Or know? Or for you? These are your quarters, too. Shame? Is that what you are feeling now? Shame? Did you tell Pola you didn't know? Did you pretend you weren't here? It must be so much easier to pretend....

ZSUZSANNA. Zsofia.

ZSOFIA. ...to PRETEND that nothing was going on. Lying there, pretending to sleep. Pretending you don't hear the cries coming from five feet away. (*As she speaks, hooded figures begin to come into the room*

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behind her. She ignores what she believes are attempts to interrupt what she is saying.) Do you feel nothing? Or victory because you were too ugly for even a demon to look twice...

ZSUZSANNA. *(Quietly, in reference to the people behind Zsofia) Stop.*

SZOFIA. Why? I don't say any of this to ease her pain! She deserves it. This... this BOY comes into my room...

POLA. *(Warning) Zso!*

ZSOFIA. BOY! What!? You can't possibly call that a man! No man would take such...privilege. No man would be able to ignore the screams and cries of another person....someone who wants nothing more than to be left alone...to be...*(she finally backs into a person right behind her. She turns. Looks up into the hood. Terror.) Please.... (The figure grabs her. The other figures move closer around...to protect... to assist. The other girls cower, except Zsuzsanna, who moves forward, trying to help Zsofia pull free.)*

ZSUZANNA. *(Struggling) Leave go of her! (In the ensuing struggle, the figures try and separate Zsuzsanna from the figure holding on to Zsofia. In the struggle, Zsofia has been pulling at the figure and its hood. Finally, in a burst of energy, Zsofia pulls back the figures hood, revealing P'al.*

Zsuzsanna has her hands on P'al's arm and, as he is revealed, he turns his face to her. The blank look Zsofia has described is on his face. He looks directly at Zsuzsanna, almost without seeing her. She begins to struggle with him, pulling at his arms.) Leave her be! (He gives her his full attention) Why are you...? (Absently, P'al backhands her. She falls to the ground. Everyone freezes for a moment. P'AL turns and looks at Zsofia.)

SOFIA. No....please. *(As P'al takes her arm, the other hooded figures join in, helping him remove her from the room. Zsofia's protests becomes pleas for help and, finally, cries of terror as she is escorted from the room. After the figures have exited, Pola and Judit rush to Zsuzsanna who is lying on the floor, half in shock, half in terror, whimpering at what she has just witnessed and the shocking pain in her face. Lights fade.)*

TIGRESS

SCENE 6

Zsofia's screams have resonated throughout the castle, but, we continue to hear them as a distant echo. They are seeming overlaid by the sound of a man screaming. These screams seem more present, more pained. As the lights come up, we see a man in a bed, coughing. Near him, on the bed, we see a seeming more youthful Anna. She is wiping his face, around his mouth – napkin covered in blood. Elizabeth enters the room, looks to the figures on the bed. Freezes.

ELIZABETH. It is possible that there will be little left in terms of the time you have. But, in that spare moment, you might consider explaining your presence on my husband's bed.

ANNA. As in all things, it is at his request.

ELIZABETH. (*Approaching her.*) Which does little in terms of adding sand to your glass.

FERENC. (*Through a cough.*) Erzbeth.

ELIZABETH. Save your air for your cough. This *thing* has no business in my bedchamber.

ANNA. Be that as it may, I was summoned. And when Ferenc asked for....

ELIZABETH. (*At the sound of her husband's name, Elizabeth's hand flies, striking Anna on the side of her face.*) That name came far too easily from your lips. I am not unaware of my husband's whores, but I won't have one in my chamber, less on the sheets of my vows. Men can only be expected to have so much in the way of manners, but (*turning on her husband who has, we realize, been chuckling, as it turns to laughter.*) WHAT could you possibly find of such humor?!

FERENC. Anna is NOT my lover. Such a thing isn't possible.

ELIZABETH. And why not. She's young. She's attractive.

ANNA. Thank you, Your Grace.

ELIZABETH. For a whore. There's no reason for me to believe she isn't here with purpose.

FERENC. And so she is.

ELIZABETH. As I said.

TIGRESS

FERENC. I hold no interest for her.

ELIZABETH. Why? When in your health, you are as fine a man as she is a woman. Clearly she is more than capable of satisfy....(*dawning on her*)....Oh.

FERENC. (*Still chuckling.*) There are times you are still the naïve young woman I married.

ELIZABETH. I was never naïve. You were easily plied. (*Still angry, but softening.*) Still, I should have realized that someone of her youth would have no interest in a withering stallion more foundering than founded.

FERENC. Oh, but still worth the find.

ELIZABETH. Which I allow you to believe.

FERENC. So, I am forgiven being so bold as to have a Szapphó in our chambers?

ELIZABETH. I seem to have little say in the matter.

ANNA. I meant no disrespect, My Lady.

FERENC. And she was here at my request.

ELIZABETH. For what purpose?

FERENC. To serve.

ELIZABETH. Very clearly. But, as has been established, that does nothing to clarify my question. (*Once more we hear the cries of a man. This time more 'present'. They appear to be coming from nearby and are weakening.*) This! This was my purpose for entering the chamber. What are those cries?

ANNA. They mean little.

FERENC. Anna, don't be coy. It's time.

ELIZABETH. Time for what?

FERENC. Anna has been working with me for some time. Since my return from battle. I have tried to keep her from you.

ELIZABETH. No less troubling.

FERENC. Be that as it may, the point was to make as much progress as possible before it became necessary to involve you.

ELIZABETH. In what?

ANNA. I have been teaching Fere....(*stops herself*)...My Lord.

ELIZABETH. Teaching?

FERENC. And nursing. I was far worse off than you knew. The infection

was taking its toll and I was not regaining strength. Anna has ...practices. Ways that are not known to medicine. She has been....well....for some time, she worked with....

ELIZABETH. (*Simply.*) She's a witch.

ANNA. If it please you.

ELIZABETH. My pleasure is irrelevant, is it working?

FERENC. For some time now, we have thought it was. Her practices are not what could be called acceptable by modern science.

ELIZABETH. Anna. My husband is a remarkable summation of his sex. Squamish and vague.

ANNA. Pain, My Lady. Pain and blood.

ELIZABETH. And, in this way, you are making him better?

ANNA. He's still alive.

ELIZABETH. How is inflicting pain on him supposed to heal him? (*Now Ferenc and Anna both look at each other and laugh.*) This is becoming tiresome.

FERENC. Flicka!

ANNA. The pain belongs not to his Lordship.

ELIZABETH. An opportunity lost. (*Ferenc chuckles, then coughs.*) Your humor helps little!

FERENC. Calm, my love.

FLICKA. (*Entering – a younger Flicka than we have seen.*) Yes, My Lord?

FERENC. Bring in our guest.

FLICKA. As your Grace wishes. (*Exits.*)

ANNA. We have been working with a man from My Lord's service.

FERENC. Jakob. A devoted soldier and friend.

ANNA. It was necessary to have someone of similar build and stature. Whose stamina could withstand the practice and whose devotion would take time to waiver.

ELIZABETH. Why is devotion necessary? Simply take what you need. These people are our servants, nothing more.

FERENC. Erzbeth....

TIGRESS

ELIZABETH. Ridiculous notions of ‘friendship’. He is a man of this village, his life is yours. Take what you need.

ANNA. Exactly, My Lady.

FERENC. Clearly, you are more suited to each other than either realizes. But, Jakob was my friend. (*Flicka reenters bringing a man, JAKOB. Were he, at one time, of similar stature and stamina, he is no more. As weak and ill as Ferenc appears, Jakob is half the man. Flicka places him on the ground and leaves.*)

ELIZABETH. (*Observing. Detached.*) You said this man was of your stature.

ANNA. And so he was.

JAKOB. (*Weakly.*) Brother, please...

ANNA. (*Striking Jakob.*) Do not speak to My Lord.

FERENC. Anna. Calm.

ELIZABETH. (*Pensive.*) To what end?

FERENC. What do you mean?

ELIZABETH. (*To Anna.*) You say that it is his pain and blood that are to help my husband?

ANNA. Correct.

JAKOB. Please, I beg you. No more.

ELIZABETH. You serve this kingdom.

JAKOB. Faithfully, your Grace, always!

ELIZABETH. And so, your service continues.

JAKOB. Please, nothing will pass my lips. I wish only to be with my family again.

ELIZABETH. As do I.

JAKOB. (*Seeing his fate in her eyes, a cry.*) Please!

ELIZABETH. Do you suppose your wants are more deserving than those of your Lord and Lady?

JAKOB. DORKA!

FERENC. Hush, friend. Be at ease.

ELIZABETH. What is this Dorka?

ANNA. The peasant he wed. The name spills from his lips. More so when he is in the pains.

ELIZABETH. (*Looking at him. Then at Ferenc. Then back to Anna.*)

TIGRESS

Show me.

ANNA. Yes, my lady.

JAKOB. No.....please....no more....

FERENC. My love. Are you certain?

ELIZABETH. If this witch truly has the power to heal you, then I need to see it happen.

ANNA. He will only tolerate one last session.

JAKOB. Oh, please God!

ANNA. *(To Jakob.)* You flatter me.

JAKOB. No more.

FERENC. My friend. I owe you a debt.

JAKOB. Please, Ferenc. No.

FERENC. For the Kingdom, my friend.

ELIZABETH. I care nothing for the Kingdom. I need you.

ANNA. And so, you shall have him. *(She pulls a blade from her robes and crosses behind Jakob. Elizabeth crosses behind them both to watch what happens. Her*

look is one of fascination and excitement. She is discovering something she had held inside for some time. A purpose, perhaps.)

JAKOB. *(At his end, with no strength to struggle.)* please....don't.....

FERENC. I promise, my friend. Your Dorka will be cared for.

JAKOB. Ferenc....stop her....

FERENC. I could not if I wanted to.

ELIZABETH. Do it.

FERENC. My promise, dear friend. Your family will want for nothing.

And, I will see to Zsuzsanna, myself. *(Anna's hand moves in an arch across Jakob's back. We may see a spray of blood. Elizabeth is backing up with a look of wonder on her face. Jakob begins screaming. It is sharp and piercing. It is the final sounds of a man who knows he will make no others and finds himself wishing for the end. The lights transition to:)*

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS –
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