

258 The Devils

Book of Trans Plays

Latifa I don't

Hunter I do
come here

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Scene One 259
How do you
know that go?

*er Temporalities, Contemporary Performance, and the
western University Press.*

eer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings. New

Racial History of Trans Identity. Minneapolis,

Doctor Voynich and Her Children

A Prediction

Leanna Keyes

Rue And you'll have all that and more soon. But not today.

Harrison Hnng.

Rue Patience. Good things come to those who wait.

Harrison How long are you here for?

Rue Hard to say.

Harrison Doctor Voynich, are you being cagey with me?

Rue Not at all, officer.
Probably a week. Depends on how fast word spreads that we're out here.

Harrison (*she's said this a hundred times*) Settle down. Start a respectable greenhouse. Grow stuff.

Rue (*she's heard that a hundred times*) Who can afford to see a med-tech in this town?

Harrison Me. A few.

Rue Not enough.

Harrison Don't see how that's my problem.

Rue Darling. They need these plants, grey zone or not. Either they buy ground sorrel from me or they go out into the woods and try to make medicine themselves. You don't want that any more than I do. They'll end up eating weeds. Just look the other way, please.

Harrison

Rue I'll give you plenty of other things to look at.

Harrison A week?

Rue A week.

Harrison And nothing illegal in here?

Rue Just me.

Harrison (*undeterred*) Dope. Weed. Emmenagogues. Anything that could kill a person. Or an unborn person.
You don't know anything about that.

Rue I'm harmless.
Cross my heart, hope to die.

START

Scene Two

Monday evening, with fringes of orange.

Rue is closing up shop, covering some of the plants with tarps, putting others back into or onto the Ambulatory. An orchestra of crickets, cicadas, katydids. A pair of folding lawn chairs are set up.

Footfalls, in sync. Fade and Hannah emerge from the twilight, carrying bags of supplies.

Rue (*not looking*) Took you long enough. The whole day without you! I almost lost out on a sale of that willow root because we got backed up and—
Oh! Hello. Goodness, I didn't expect you back. Is everything okay with your order?

You, put away those supplies.

How can I help you?

Hannah I need
I, uh

Rue This isn't about one of your purchases, is it.
Alright, honey, come here, have a seat.

Hannah Thanks.

Rue So what seems to be the trouble, my dear?

Hannah I'm pregnant and I don't want to be.

Rue And you think that I can do anything about that?
Abortion is illegal, and don't let the "Doctor" in my title fool you, I'm just a glorified gardener.

Hannah I don't

But

People said

Rue (*intentionally loud*) I would hate for you to have made the trip all the way out here for nothing, stay for a while.

Fade, make yourself useful. Please take the young lady's purse, it looks quite heavy.

I'm afraid you have the wrong impression.
If you're pregnant, that's God's will, and you'll come to love the little him or her.

Fade stashes away **Hannah's** purse. *She reaches into the cab and turns on the radio.*

Rue Now that that's taken care of.

Fade, be more careful next time or I'm leaving you on the side of the road.

Hannah I don't understand.

Fade You have a phone. Which has a microphone.
They listen sometimes.

Hannah You should have told me.

Rue She was supposed to. This is why she's still an apprentice. She gets distracted by a pretty girl.

Hannah & Fade

Rue So, you're pregnant. How long?

Hannah I don't know.

Rue Just your best guest is fine.

Hannah

Rue Okay, come here. I'm going to feel your belly, is that okay? Lift up your shirt and brace yourself, there will be some pressure. When you're ready.

Hannah

Fade It's okay. Here. Can I?

Fade *cozies up behind Hannah and braces her. Hannah lifts her shirt. Rue feels her.*

Rue Well, we're still in the first trimester. That means three months.

When was your last period? You can drop your shirt.

Hannah Um. I'm not sure.

Rue You don't track your cycle. Alright. When did you last have unprotected sex?

Hannah Unprotected?

Rue Without a condom.

Hannah

Rue [Christ alive.]

Fade Rue.

Rue Okay, let's go back to basics. Hannah, why do you think you're pregnant?

Hannah Well, I'm sad. Big sad.

Rue Any symptoms more definitive than feeling sad?

Hannah Um.

I haven't bled in a while. I've felt a little sick. Here. I threw up last week for like, no reason.

Oh God this is so embarrassing.

But I guess I did

Swallow

A lot recently

Rue & Fade

Hannah That's bad, right

Fade *(biting the bullet)* Hannah . . . that's not how you get pregnant.

Hannah Sure it is. How else does the white stuff, y'know, get to the belly?

Fade I, It's

The "belly" is just something people say, it's just a saying. You only get pregnant if someone comes in your vagina.

Hannah

Fade

Hannah You know I can see that.

Rue That's good.

Hannah Yeah that makes a lot more sense. Well, wait

Like the come in the vagina thing That does happen sometimes.

Fade Doctor, may I administer a pregnancy test to our patient?

Rue You don't think that's contraindicated here?

Hannah I can pay.

Rue These tests are rare and getting rarer. At the risk of assuming too much about you, Hannah, I don't know that you have the funding for it.

Hannah

Fade I'll pay.

Rue & Hannah

Fade

Rue On your own head.

Rue *retrieves a lockbox from the inside of the Ambulatory. She inputs a complicated combination and pulls out a dusty, faded pregnancy test.*

Rue There's a little plastic stick inside this box. Take it into the bushes and pee on it.

Hannah

Fade Yes, really.

Hannah That's nasty.

Rue So is giving birth. Go on. It'll give you a little plus sign if you're pregnant. Good luck.

Hannah *heads off into the bushes to take the test.*

Rue *(calling after her)* You pee on the stick, not the box!

Hannah *(from off)* I got it!

Fade

Rue So. You're being awfully . . . proactive for this one.

Fade She deserves more than this.

Rue You're not wrong. But we all deserve more than this. Planet cooking itself to death. The country broken up. Abortion and birth control lost. The Supreme Court, Christ. But that's been true for as long as you've been alive, young blood.

Fade In another life, I think I could have been her. You know? If I'd been raised in a Heartland town with no prospects instead of . . . well, with you. In her place, I'd want someone to help.

Rue Has it occurred to you that you might harden your heart deliberately? Caring is important. Caring too much is dangerous. You need to channel your feelings to make yourself stronger, not let your feelings control you. People you care about can be used against you.

Fade

Rue Bless your heart. In the non-sarcastic way. You're a promising apprentice. But you need to live in this world, not the one you wish for. You might live for a future time . . . but the people in power don't.

Fade I . . . I'll think about it.

Hannah *returns from the underbrush, a new look on her face.*

Rue That's settled, then. Come here.

Rue *gives her a hug, which Hannah accepts. Fade looks at her master, surprised.*

Hannah Now what?

Rue Fade, make some tea. Pennyroyal, dittany . . . Queen Anne's lace, and . . . let's do Artemisia.

(To Hannah.) You have a decision to make. I know you came here because you wanted an abortion, but really think about it. You can't half-ass this, if you'll pardon the expression. The body knows. There are medications I can give you, but just the herbs aren't enough. You need to be resolved and diligent. Can you do that?

Hannah I think so.

Rue You need to know so.

Hannah I . . .

Rue Tell me about why you want an abortion.

Hannah Oh, God. Where to start? My mother. She'll kill me. And I'm only like kind of joking. She'll be so disappointed in me.

"You don't even have a boyfriend."

There's so much I want to do. Get out of this town, go to college, get a real job. I'm not a mother.

A baby? What do you even do with a baby? It's too much.

You push a . . . a person? Through *this*? I'll break. I'll come apart.

Rue Do you ever want a child?

Hannah

Rue It's okay not to know. You're young.

Hannah I'm just thinking. If I had to decide now . . .

No.

If you ask me again tomorrow, maybe I'll say "someday." But right here, right now . . .

No. I don't want this one, and I don't want one ever. Does that make sense?

Fade Hmm. "I am whoever I am when I am it, I will live tomorrow as someone I have not yet become."

Hannah

Fade Angel Haze. Lesbian scripture.

Hannah I like that.

Rue Ask me again.

Hannah Can I have an abortion?

Rue Yes.

Hannah and Rue *share an emotional moment. Fade hands Hannah the tea.*

Fade Here you are.

Hannah Oh, I don't drink tea, but thank you.

Fade No, no, it's a tea. That's how this works. That's made with abortifacient herbs.

Hannah That's it?

Rue It's not as easy as it sounds. It tastes like the Devil's earwax, for one. Because you're probably pretty late on, we're going to be using a shotgun approach. There are dozens of plants that help induce menstruation, and you'll be on several. Not by accident, most of them are also semi-toxic. There will be side effects, like—

Hannah As long as one of the side effects is not being pregnant, I'll deal with it.
She downs the tea and hands the cup back.

Rue You're tougher than people give you credit for, aren't you?

Hannah

Rue Any questions?

Hannah So what if it doesn't come out?

Rue It will. You need to trust the process. Your body and mind will work together with the herbs in the tea. It will work.

Hannah (*trying to believe*) It'll work.
Okay. So should I go back out into the bushes for this or

Rue What?

Hannah When the thing comes out.

Fade Oh, uh, it doesn't work that fast

Hannah I drank the tea, we should be done here, right? I drank it.

Rue This is a course of treatment, not a one-and-done. You'll see results in a week or so.

Hannah That's too late!

Fade Why?

Hannah It's gotta be now. Do it now.

Rue Hannah, there's nothing I can do to make this happen faster. It takes time.

Hannah You're not listening. My mom's going to find out.

Rue

Fade Why do you think that?

Hannah She's the nosiest bitch alive, she can already tell something's wrong

Rue [Language . . .]

Hannah And if I have to keep drinking this stinky tea she's going to figure out it has something to do with you

You've never seen her when she's angry

Take it out.

And don't tell me that you can't because I know that's a thing.

Like you can kick me, or vacuum it out or whatever

Rue We don't do that.

Hannah You need to, or—or I'll tell the sheriff about this.

Rue No, you won't.

Hannah I will! Take it out. Or I'll report you.

Rue Do you think you're the first person to threaten me?

Hannah

Rue I understand that you're upset, so I won't be taking this personally. As long as you stop this foolishness. Now.

Fade Please, don't say anything. Every herb we've given you has a "legitimate" use. If you combine them in a manner likely to cause an abortion, you can be charged with attempted murder of an unborn person.

Rue We're doing the best we can for you.

(*To Fade.*) Give her the next dosage.

(*To Hannah.*) Teenage girls go through all sorts of phases. If your mom asks why you're suddenly drinking tea, just tell her that you're mysterious and full of emotion.

Fade Don't panic about something that hasn't happened yet. We'll be here for a while.

We are not going to abandon you.

Hannah This is not okay.

Hannah *departs with the next dosage, upset. The herbalists watch her go.*

Fade We could have helped her.

Rue We are helping her.

Fade She's right though. This isn't okay.
There are other ways.

Rue Not anymore.

Fade *scoffs.*

Rue Look, the knowledge didn't just vanish when we lost in the Court. But it's useless without the right tools. They destroyed all the actual equipment back in the Trump days.

Fade Donald?

Rue Ivanka. Thank you, first woman president.

Fade I'm worried about her.

Rue Yeah, well.

Me too.

But there's nothing more we can do to help her than what we're already doing. Herbs helped people control their fertility for six thousand years. She has more in common with a Greek woman wearing a bedsheet than she does with her great-grandmother, right now.

Christ.

End Scene